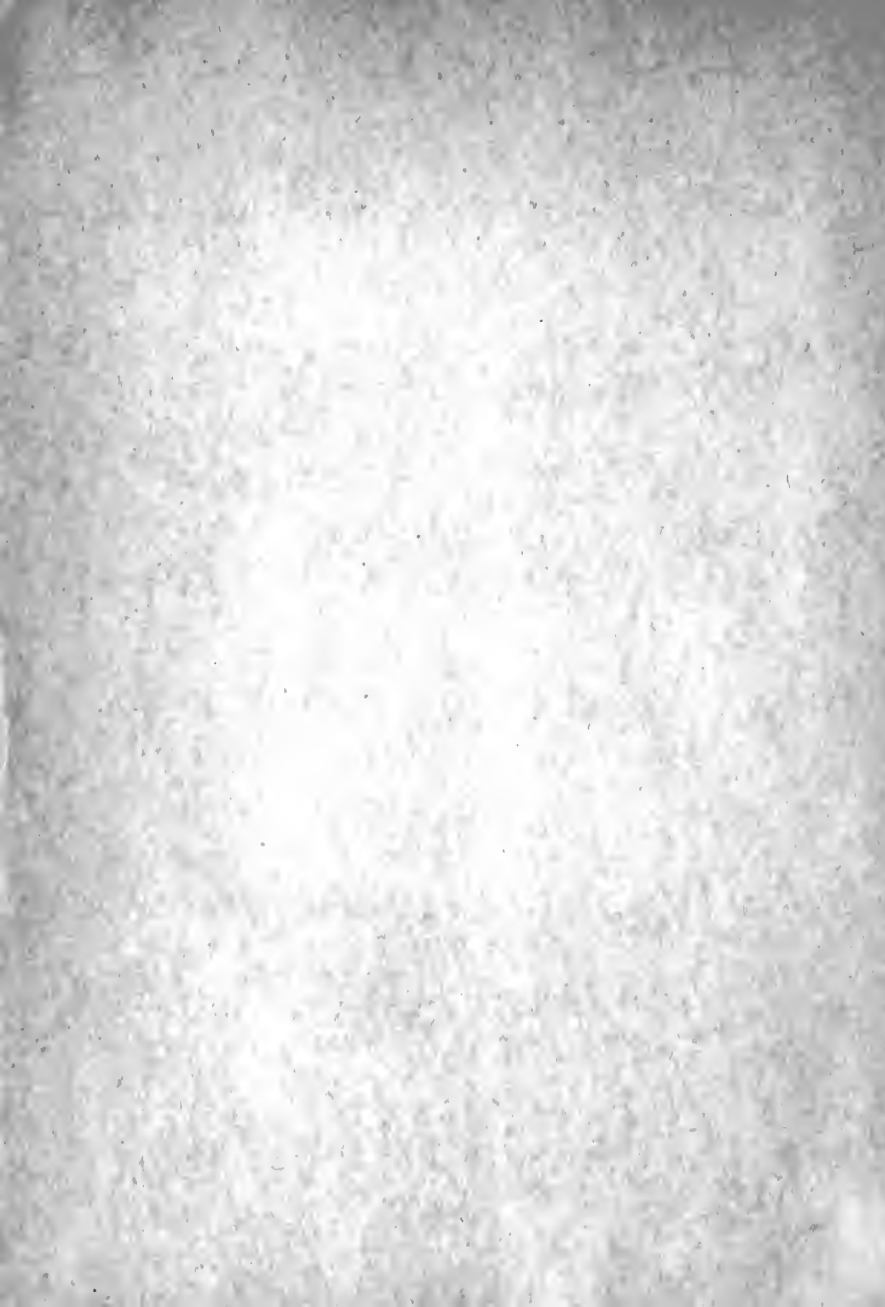


IN MEMORIAM
JOSEPH GASTON, M. D.

1816-1885

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To the Memory
of
JOSEPH GASTON, M. D.

Born in Basking Ridge, New Jersey
November sixth, Eighteen hundred and sixteen
Passed to his reward at Honeybrook, Chester County,
Pennsylvania, January twenty-fifth
Eighteen hundred and eighty-five





WILLIAM B. GASTON
AUGUST 9, 1791—MARCH 9, 1859



ELIZABETH KIRKPATRICK GASTON
SEPTEMBER 21, 1789—JANUARY 28, 1837

JOSEPH GASTON
TO
HUGH M. GASTON

SOUTH EASTON
January 16, 1838.

DEAR HUGH:

There is, perhaps, no moral truth possessing such universality in its application, and so immutably based on experience, as the fact that happiness in this life is equably distributed among men. It is true, that when we look casually on the world, we are apt to form the same opinion as when we cursorily survey nature; that it is made up of mountains and valleys, precipitous crags, and dismal caves, now a glen through which some tumultuous stream rushes with headlong impetuosity, bearing along with it, all, save the barren rocks on which it courses—and then a peak so high, so barren, so much the sport of wind, of storm and tempest, that even an eagle would not deign to rest him there, save for his innate pleasure of *looking down* on all things else below. Each object in nature has its own counterpoise of ill. 'Tis true, the snow crowned mountain can boast its elevated standing mid creation; and raised on tiptoe scan the world around, but for this slight prominence, who does not see that *barrenness* is blazoned on its snowy crest, that there the hurricane and storm pour forth their deadliest rage, and the red lightning points his forked arrows. 'Tis true, a valley decked in all the garniture of spring, or clad in the prolific garb of summer looks pre-eminently beautiful; but see, yon awful cloud approaches, black with horror and murmuring in notes of thunder the weight of woe she bears! The premonitory flash tells of the impending dis-

solution; it bursts—the deeper blackness, the howling of the storm, the fragments borne in zigzag cones bespeak the power of the tempest; while deluges of rain bear down their floating treasures from the rich alluvion into the swelling streamlet which murmured once so quietly within its peaceful bosom. Its borders swell, it overleaps its banks, surcharged with new and still increasing tides, it rushes madly on—till, strengthened by each new recession, fiercer by each coming impulse, and borne on with more resistless might, it overwhelms this spot *too much like paradise* not to be visited by a *deluge*. Thus the high and low in nature have each a like sufficient to elevate or depress them to the common *standard*, the vast prairie of the world, where all the eminences have been required to fill the chasms.

If this be true with *nature*, much rather so with *men*.

The king, surrounded with all the pomp and circumstance of state, reveling in luxury and wealth, and drinking in vanity from the thousand sycophants that in turn possess his ear—his lofty station makes him but the fitter mark for those shafts of calumny which envious men will hurl, while his increased sensibility makes the pain more poignant of the wounds they may inflict. The poor man, though he wade in poverty and eat his bread with sorrowing of heart, has none of those pangs which avarice darts through the bosom of the rich, lest poverty should one day come, or frowning fate pervert his present sunshine into gloom. It appears to be a principle of our nature that, with our increasing capacities and modes for happiness, increases our moral sensibility to pain—the ignorant plowman who “whistles as he wends his way for want of thought,” feels not the drudgery of his occupa-

tion, nor pants for treasures which a refined intellect can alone appreciate or possess. The world may sneer and scoff, but what cares he for that? From that source he is not susceptible of an impression—but who will pretend that this person's capacities for happiness equal that man's whose moral and intellectual endowments are developed, and who would writhe in torture under those inflictions which upon the former fell powerless. But you will say, whither tends all this? From your letter, I judged that you had formed the envious idea that I was residing in Elysian bowers, sipping nectar from the thornless flowers that luxuriate around me, and with nothing to do but fold my arms in sleepy indolence, and say within my pampered soul, "Tomorrow shall be as today. Jog along, world." If by letting you into the secret of my own true state I can make you more reconciled with your own, I shall have accomplished my purpose in returning this speedy answer to your acceptable letter. You are aware (if not, I must acquaint you) that Mrs. D. is a haughty, proud, vindictive, mean and miserly woman; that her thoughts are centered on the trinkets and pelf of this world, to the exclusion of the other, to which by profession she makes some pretensions. She is one of those miserly souls who would starve in the house for the sake of exhibiting herself abroad—the most contemptible of all the race. Well, some time before I was home (I did not see fit then to tell you) I and she had a skirmish. The occasion this: one Sabbath evening after church (you must remember that she has been but twice to church at Easton since I have been here) she was sitting in our new kitchen, around the stove, with a small lamp in her hand, reading. I took another one of the

same kind from the shelf (for to have the benefit of a light in my own room during the summer nights I had bought one) and took a book to read, so that we each of us had a lamp; but her parsimonious soul instantly suggested that she should prefer to do without reading than that I should have a light too. So, because I would not take her lamp and deprive her of the privilege of reading, she blew hers out, and I thought no more of it till next morning, when I found she was mad, and waiting for me to come with honey on my tongue, as I had on similar occasions for a similar cause—but I saw fit, like it happened to Ephraim of old, to let her alone. You must recollect that at this time, and ever since I have been here, I have laid the whole of them under innumerable obligations to me for services (for the truth is that I have spent about three-fourths of my time since I have been here faithfully in the promotion of their and Alex's interests. I almost exclusively took care of their garden, from which we have been living more or less ever since, and in other work about the premises, in which I always took the most difficult part, for the relief of Alex, who, I knew, was not able to bear as much as I). So when the old woman kicked, I was determined that so far as she was concerned I would withhold my services; so you see, it worked her prodigiously, and she began to think about articles of capitulation when another occurrence took place to make the breach wider. You see, Alex and I had taken the trouble to go over into Jersey to get some winter apples, and for want of a proper place at that time of the year (it being too warm to put them in the cellar) we put them in the office, inasmuch as then it was almost too cold to sit there without fire and yet too

warm to require a stove. So for a long time I did not go to the office to study, but had my books at the house. Among these apples were some bell-flowers which we all prized. Well, occasionally Alex and I would go to the office for things and then take two or three apples in our pockets (we had eighteen bushels in all). Well, before my rent with Mrs. D. was made whole, Eliz. one day got talking about the apples and wanted us to bring them down to the house. To this I made some slight objection—that there was nothing to put them in, or no proper place, or something of that sort—and then she immediately retorted upon me, and said that I would like very well to have them kept there, that I might get them when I pleased, for, said she, *there is not a time that I go up there but I bring back my pockets full*. This I would not stand (for frequently they had thrown up to me that I had taken things from the dresser. Sometimes before I would go to bed, if there was an old crust or something that scarce a dog would eat I would take it, instead of the quid of bitter reflection. And many times at table, if perchance I should remain longer than Alex and take another piece of bread, they would look up, catch each other's eyes, and smile or gape in wonderment, as much as to say, "Oh, what a hog!" And yet at the very time sit by and eat a half an hour longer themselves). So I blazed away pretty smartly, being pretty cautious of what language I used, knowing well that things may be forgiven but not forgotten. But Eliz. caught fire as I proceeded and blabbed away so furiously that I told *her to keep her jaw*, that I might get a word in for my own vindication. I never noticed my expression at the time, and was perfectly innocent in the use of

it, for she had told me the same a hundred times. So to get out of the dust I saw rising I went out, and, while out, Mrs. D. made her appearance in the room. When Eliz. told her the mortal affront I had given her in her *jaw*, which so raised her that her anger about the poor lamp, which had run silent for so long, now burst forth into a babbling torrent when I returned. And as I conceived her a more fit game than Eliz., I dealt with her without gloves. Alex raved but rather took my part. Eliz. cried, and tried in her heart to throw up my living here, "on her bounty, in *her house*," as she said, but I tell you I soon showed her who she had to deal with on that score. I told the whole of them I considered it no favor that I lived here, that I asked no favors of them and had received none, so they were shut up. Then by degrees something passed over the face of the troubled waters and it became calm, but as they evaporated there was considerable putrid matter remaining, a species of *marsh malaria*, which now and then produces a fit of the ague. Thus I live very unhappily here now, and, were it not for my sincere desire to prosecute my studies, and at length be able to throw off the shackles of this *partial dependence*, I would leave instanter. It is no very pleasant thing, every time you come into the house, to be told to be very particular to scrape your feet, to be dogged as you go about the house and to be strictly scrutinized upon everything you approach. I treat them all with the coldest indifference, for of late Alex seems disposed to look sour. We eat but twice a day, and then it's only because I have learned enough of the world to help myself that my wants are satisfied. It is not very pleasant, even at a brother's table, to have it said by *actions*, "I

don't care whether he gets anything or no." The old woman hates father with a perfect hatred, and blazes out frequently to Alex because he does not give him a thousand or so. She has an idea that he is wealthy, and thinks he ought to be liberal to Alex, who is the better off of the two. The newspapers which you and Fred send, you address mostly to Alex. Now the women have got the idea that I have no right to see them at all, and hence one of those you sent last the old woman, out of pure maliciousness, has hidden it somewhere that I cannot find it. Now I want you to be particular in future to address all your newspapers to *me*, for Alex will get them just as soon as if addressed to him, and then I will have the additional pleasure of withholding them from *them*, for the Somerville news they have no business with. They all look at present as cold as possible, and it would look like mockery in me to smile upon a glacier. Whenever they begin to show signs of a thaw, then I will begin to bud and blossom, but until then the "winter of our discontent" must continue. Eliz. lately had another abortion, making four. I doubt much whether she will ever be able to fulfil her time. I never stay at the house now any more than I can help, hence in the morning formerly I used to lay abed till breakfast time to get clear of being in the house among them. But now I have thought of another expedient, viz.: to get up early and go to the office, and there spend an hour or so which would otherwise be slumbered away. The old woman hates me with the purest hatred, and I cannot say but that I *love* her quite as *much*. So you will see from my detail that there is no station in life, which however inviting its exterior may be, but has its attendant evils;

no cup, however sweet, but has its dregs; no rose, however fragrant, but its thorn. Then, my dear brother, let us jog as quietly along as possible, making the most of those opportunities which a kind Providence may put in our way, and strive each to attain a thorough knowledge of our professions, that when the time shall come, when we can divest ourselves of the trappings of dependence, we may buckle on our own armour with the confidence of success. I hope to repay those who are so kind now as to consider us a burden. My ardent wish is, that I may speedily have it in my power to repay Alex for my board (although what I do for him is more than a compensation), that even to him I may boldly say, "I owe you nothing." And if I did not think that by following my profession I would be able more speedily to accomplish this purpose, I would instantly renounce it and seek some other employment which might bring a more speedy return. Hugh, we must get our professions. The western world lies before us, beckoning such as we to her bosom. There is yet room for industry and enterprise; there genius and talent will be *cradled*, which here would be *exposed*; there many a man will exhibit powers, which, if he had remained here, he might have continued the dumb possessor. That I have written above was not proper, perhaps, that you should know, but I have communicated to you my situation, that you might become more content with your own; hoping and knowing that what I have written will go no further, and I therefore request that you will dispose of this letter speedily. You had a sorry time getting your lady off, but since the coast is clear, cheer up. Give my love to all. I am sorry it was not practicable for me to get the academy there this

winter. What think you of the prospect in the spring? I do not know anything about the Chester County business. I have not conversed with Alex on the subject for some time. Adieu.

JOS. GASTON.

P. S.—Thursday:

I wrote this letter as soon as I received yours, but in consequence of the intolerably bad roads I have not been able to get to town to have it mailed. When you write, merely acknowledge the receipt of this, but make no comments (I hope by that time the sun of peace will have arisen, for the sky at present indicates a dawning), for then *he* might presume the contents of this. I do not write because I have a malicious pleasure in detailing family news, much less of *his* family, but merely to acquaint you that appearances often lie. Alex and Eliz. are devotedly attached to each other, and have within themselves the ingredients of matrimonial bliss, but Mrs. D., like Aeolus of old, often has occasion to let the winds out of the bag, upon much less grounds than the mandate of a Juno, to swell to mountain surges the peaceful waters. She is a strange amalgum—now a summer's morning, now a gale, and now a long, dreary storm; not violent, and often without rain, yet just sufficient to withhold the sun and spread a general gloom—and yet withal one whom they could scarce dispense with, and one whose bad qualities ought, perhaps, to be endured for the good ones she possesses. A faithful ear is rather to be trusted than a penny post, and therefore I will defer giving you the *filling in* of this *framework* till I can address you *viva voca*.

Adieu.

J. G.

P. S.—Write soon, for a running stream not only makes its bed the smoother for its future course, but bears away those filthy sediments which might sully its purity.

J. G.

The *Congressional Globe*, that I take, is merely the minutes of proceedings in the different Houses—not the Administration papers.

Blair and Rives are the printers.

FREDERICK AND JOSEPH GASTON

TO

HUGH M. GASTON

POMPTON

June 9, 1839.

DEAR HUGH:

Drawing the natural conclusion from your silence, viz., that my letter had unfortunately never reached its destination; and as much to relieve a suspense which may be disagreeable, or to check your invectives against *seeming indifference* in a correspondent, as to relieve myself of a burden, which a consciousness of your surprise has imposed upon me, I have again drawn a rusty pen from its more rusty scabbard, to battle with a host your irritability may have summoned. It is just two weeks since I wrote to you, and as yet have not had the satisfaction to receive its acknowledgment. The fact may either be that you have not written, or, if you have, through the carelessness of the post, has miscarried. Of either, I am inclined to suspect the latter; the more so, that in one

instance, a letter due brother Jos. from a correspondent, bore evident marks of having been perhaps a month on the road, which at last was safely lodged in the postoffice. Therefore the necessity of more particularly designating the place, to wit—Pompton, Passaic Co., New Jersey—is evident. As this letter is rather an inquiry into the cause of existing things, than a minute picture, or a transcript of the present appearance of our ideas, brevity would be more consistent on its character than . . .

FRED.

P. S.—I wish something were done about having my name entered in the office of some regular physician. One fact is certain . . . necessary . . . other, and why . . . be gained or important.

The Drs. here have no skull, and ideas I may get of its structure are limited and often incorrect. The short time I may be here, I hope will be attended, if with other good results, at least “the acquirement of” a taste for study. I have not said half I would like, neither have I paid sufficient attention to the “arrangement of” thought and expression. The mood I am in opposed looking around for ideas, or noting them if found, from the millerary of Fancy.

Sincerely yours,

FREDK. GASTON.

P. S.—We clambered up a high mountain yesterday (Saturday) to view the “Plains,”* two or three miles south, and though the sight rewarded us for our toil, I purchased it at the expense of a cold which has pestered me ever since. This, together with a headache, you must

* Pompton Plains.

receive as an apology for the shortness of this epistle. Have you had any communication from Brandywine Manor lately? Will they celebrate the *Fourth* in Somerville? Any news from Meadville? How about the 26th? Will you take the trouble to send us a paper now and then? And will you take the trouble to write a long letter, &c. to &c. Jos. will write a postscript. My next shall be longer.

Adieu.

F.

HUGH:

It is now within ten minutes of school time, therefore excuse my brevity. The school remains at about 52 at present. There will be more, likely, soon. I am reading Scott's Novels—have made quite a hole in the first volume. Pascal is about half through—medicine is creeping along slowly. Painting is marching along with an accelerating pace. Landscapes now and then rear their beauteous heads "*to cheer the lonely desert.*" I am taking some views about here. I have lately received. . . . Sarah Cornell was here lately. Domine Desmond has left here rather unexpectedly and accepted a call from New York City. The girls come on here as usual; that is, so far as I know, for I have not been anywhere to visit. My whole time is constantly occupied, and, although my brain sometimes feels as if it were composed of lead, yet I enjoy in the general very good health. Fred is at present attending particularly to Latin. I think, inasmuch as he has no skull, it would be useless to attend much at present to anatomy. We manage to spend our time profitably as well as agreeably. Give the girls a good shake for me, and tell them they must take care

how they bring on the crisis without my knowing it. I calculate to be down at commencement. Who is to deliver the address before the students? How are you all? How do you feel, and what do you do and think? Time wanes, the bell soon tolls and I must needs depart for school.

JOS. GASTON.

WILLIAM B. GASTON
TO
JOSEPH AND FRED'K GASTON

SOMERVILLE
June 26, 1839.

MY DEAR SONS:

Many are the changes that take place in this world, and one more is just made in reference to myself. How many are still to take place, in the few fleeting days of my earthly pilgrimage, and what those changes are, and when they are to come, is only known to Him in whose hands are our breath and all our ways. Yes, my dear sons, this is a world of change; in the material world summer succeeds spring, autumn summer, and winter autumn. "Do the Prophets live forever; where are they?" Our friends often become our enemies, or they sicken and die out of our sight. Earthly treasure is constantly changing hands, the affluent often by some sudden move become reduced to poverty, and the poor by persevering industry we frequently see exalted. And we ourselves are changing, both in a moral and physical point of view, and will, ere long, change our situations in this sublunary

state for an unchanging abode in the world of spirits. Strive to have a great moral change take place in your hearts and lives, seek to be made new creatures in Christ Jesus, remember Him who hath said, "I am the resurrection and the life, and whosoever believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." Make concession of daily prayer, for the renewing of the Holy Spirit, to change your hearts and fit you for heaven, where, if we all are permitted to meet at last, (and what if we do not?) there will be no more change, except it be from glory to glory throughout everlasting ages.

I have rented my storehouse to a Messrs. Woodman and Stebbins. Stebbins is the son of Mr. Stebbins, owner of the water-power and factory, now connected with your Uncle in his enterprise. They give me \$150 rent and the further sum of \$50 for giving immediate possession. They take my molasses, oil and some other articles amounting to about \$100. I have had a vendue, and sold part of my small things. Many things I have run off at cost, and what remains I will sell when I open my shoe store, which I am going to have in the room next to Mr. Brown's office. From what I have done in the shoe business I am encouraged to believe it will do well.

Hugh is preparing to go West—Ohio—in three or four weeks, probably will not go before your return home. I don't know anything further of interest to communicate.

Affectionately,

W. B. GASTON.

JOSEPH AND FRED GASTON
TO
HUGH M. GASTON

POMPTON
September 4, 1839.

DEAR BROTHER:

I received your letter this day, and hoping it may reach you before your departure I return this reply. I can scarcely analyse my own feelings, at this strange juncture of affairs. That you are to leave at all, has often been the subject of mournful reflections to me (for who can bring to mind the hours we have spent together from earliest childhood; the converse we have held since reason has, in some measure, substituted its sway, instead of the follies and frivolities of youth; how we have repined at the same losses, participated in the same enjoyments, now censured the stupidity of this one, now emulated the progress of that. And in our progress up the hill of science thus far, how we have endeavored to lighten each other's burden, mutually to cheer and animate, and urge to still greater speed our stars, sluggish and jaded, even at this our setting out). That we are to separate after such intercourse cannot but produce mournful emotions; but it would be as much childishness to be too much influenced by thoughts like these as it would betoken insensibility not to be affected by them. A little stoicism is a very happy ingredient in the constitution of moral character. We are no more destined to be always together than the streamlets that gurggle from the same fountain. Of virtuous and enlightened men, we are equally destined to fructify and beautify the

sphere and current Providence may direct. That *affection*, which childhood has fostered and youth matured, will not decay, whatever distance may intervene between us; but, like the electric wire, both extremities will be alike affected, whether the emotion be joy or sorrow. It will not die, though removed from the tropic clime of the paternal home. For though it may lose much of its rankness and fecundity, yet it will acquire more in strength and stability; and though it may apparently lose much of its beauty in the palmy sunshine of prosperity, yet, like the mountain oak, the energy which it disdained to appropriate to external show will be found to have been more providently expended in guarding against the hour of darkness and storm of adversity. Considering yourself then as destined to become an active member of society, though you may *feel* the force of *hidden feeling*, you must not *succumb* to its influence. Bear in mind that the first step from the paternal door may commence the career of eminence, and let that cheer you, for who does not feel the influence of honorable ambition? When the *sand hill* shall have intercepted the last look of home, and thrown a veil over a scene of a thousand endearments, then cast from your breast every feeling of dependence, and assume, in all its grandeur, the character of *Man*. It will probably require an effort, but it was to that "depth and force and energy of character that Wirt would have you to aspire." Be not disheartened by reverses, and suffer not yourself to be tortured by some slight humiliations by the way, for as you will have no character but an honest mien to support you till you arrive, like Irving, in the Prairies of Missouri, let not the want of attentions and formalities affect

you. I think, on several accounts, your going out will be the better. You will have persons near you with whom you will be acquainted, and may claim as a right whatever assistance you may require. You will go slowly, it is true, yet I do not know that in an expedition like yours there would be much gained by speed, save probably bodily ease. I hope your constitution will soon become inured to the toil of traveling. If they are conversible people, you may wile many tedious hours in that way; if not, you have the *community of self in the theatre of nature*. I would advise you to have some books of light reading at hand. They greatly assist to alleviate the weight of hours. Take the *gun* along; it may prove a source of amusement, and, when you arrive, you may probably sell it to advantage.

I am rejoiced that you have a prospect of a situation as soon as you arrive, that is the point to which my wishes have been tending. If you once get settled, and *can live*, "*the future will take care of itself*." You can work the rule of proportion, then make your statement. As Antrim Campbell is to Hugh Gaston, so is his success

c G suc

to yours, or, by symbols, As o : O :: o : Success. As to your boarding yourself, you cannot think less of it than I do.

You had better yet lunch it with the Mifs in my opinion. As to the horror you justly feel, of starting with the caravan from the door, I think I can put you in a way that will lessen some of the unpleasantness. You will, of course, go to Doc^r to bid them farewell; you can then go through that formula at home first, and get father to put in *your effects*; and, if you please, can

join the rest out of the village. It is a *pill* at best; the only question is, how it may be most easily administered. You would at least, by so doing, save the Vandevere (perhaps Mrs. Hodges likewise) the *luxury of one delicious morsel*. When you get started, do not despond. For *heaven's sake, exhibit the man!* You have everything to stimulate you—*peace, happiness and fame*. And, though difficulties may arise, like Alps on Alps, yet remember for your encouragement that even St. Gothard itself has been surmounted. By traveling slowly, when you get in the West, you will have greater facilities of acquiring requisite information. It is quite a *great thing* to leave home for the first time. Yet it is not such an herculean undertaking to go West. It is a feat performed by thousands every month. I do not think I should mind it one mite more than going up the North River. The postoffice is ever ready to facilitate the intercourse of friends. Send us tidings at every convenient interval, if it only be of your health and peace of mind.

Fred and I lately sent a letter to Ida, and perhaps she may let you see it. I write her the news, current here, in rather a singular way. It just so happened. The *machine*, the *infernal machine*, I shall pass without remark. Lev and her man have returned. So wags the world, one *goeth* and another *cometh*. I am somewhat unsettled in my own mind here, from my being engaged in a pursuit so distant in its aim, from what I expect to be the business of my life. I am anxious to commence that *career*. Let the urn turn as it may. Yet I do not know but that I may be obliged to continue another year in my present employment. If I can, by a bare possibility, get to Philadelphia next winter, I shall come out

in the spring, lank and lean, as if I had been hibernating. By taking another school then, or getting some situation as an usher, I can make some money to commence with, and get my license at any time, likewise, that I may choose. I am anxious to get through, for then I am always ready for any vacancy that may offer. Alex is fond of scheming—he had probably only had a dream of going West. There are so many if's contingencies connected with his plans that they are seldom effected as they were conceived. As to the . . . I can most deeply re-echo your exclamation, Oh!! Pride, where is thy boasting, and shame, where is thy blush? By your present conveyance you will be enabled to take more than you contemplated before. You must take Scott and my British Poets (now yours) and whatever other books you can find storage for, and think will pay the carriage. I am pleased that your destination is Illinois. There are many more Jersey men there than in any other part of the West, and when completely severed from the pitances that Jersey offers, they begin to manifest something of a liberality corresponding to the bountiful munificence of nature, with which they are everywhere surrounded. You will find many young men there from the immediate vicinity of Somerville. Bill Vanderveer is not far off. You might meet him possibly. They say that even rogues, thieves and cut throats, when cast by fate upon a desert island, feel the force of the social feeling and manifest relents of disposition, to which, through a whole course of crime, they have been perfect strangers. You may, in your own experience, attest the truth of the observation. I feel as though I had run out long ago what I had to say, yet somehow or other I cannot stop.

For the time I have been engaged in writing I have certainly got you *no slow quantity*. Farewell. As Byron, in his *Don Juan*, beautifully says (though after I had passed it I never could find it again), "A sound that makes us linger, yet farewell."

Your affectionate brother,
JOS. GASTON.

DEAR BROTHER:

To learn that your destination was Illinois was unexpected, but a moment's thought proved its probable advantages. You will be there, at least, in the same region with men whom you know, and that will be perhaps a slight satisfaction. How far is Petersburg from Fairview? You know Dominie Wilson lives there, Eoff. Pomyea, &c. There's something *romantic* as well as wounding in your mode of traveling. But, as it is so, you can only make the best of it. Take *Joe's advice in reference* to the gun; it may wile away many a tedious hour, disperse many a gloomy mist and give some idea of a Western life. You might sell it to Crop, when on the road, as payment for your fare. I'd keep a shorthand journal of your feelings while traveling, and the many little incidents and adventures that might mark the history of such a tour—they might be some source of consolation when you arrive, that you *have* surmounted *difficulties* thus far. Write now and then at intervals of traveling. Be assured they will be welcomed, and dearly cherished by *one* at least, doubtless by many more. Recollect we leave Pompton about the 6th of October, and you will not have an opportunity to write many letters in the intervening time. I will write you in *the form of a journal* when we get home. Such a mode of com-

municating would afford the more satisfaction to both of us. You had better join *the* "Caravan" out of town somewhere, as Brother Joe says. It might save honorable pride a deeper wound. I think you will understand the art of "going West" by the time you get there—nevertheless, by diligence, you may extract amusement from many an uninviting source along the road. What more shall I say? As for myself, I *hope* to spend the winter as pleasantly as possible. If I can succeed in getting that *stove and then in getting fuel*, heavens, I would rejoice. Without it I might be tempted to . . . I have commenced French. Think I can acquire it without much difficulty. Have nearly read the Fifth Book of Cæsar. As to the old hat, the lamp of Life is nearly out. The other features of my wardrobe are not much furrowed with Time. I heartily detest teaching brats, most heartily! I may say more, but forebear. Let memory's flights to the scene of your boyhood sports be seldom, and let her not return with a sigh!

Farewell! Farewell!

Your affectionate brother,
FRED GASTON.

WILLIAM B. GASTON
TO
JOSEPH GASTON

SOMERVILLE
April 4, 1840.

DEAR JOSEPH:

Yours of the 29th ult. is before me. It gives me

pleasure to hear that your prospects are so good, and that you are so well pleased with your situation. I will take up your letter in its order and say a few things on each head, &c.: *First*, you say Alex^r intends to pay up the interest to Mr. Hartwell on his obligation this spring. I suppose he intends to include the note I gave for interest in his name March 6, 1839, for \$57.75 to Mr. H. The whole will amount to nearly \$83. If Alex^r intends to pay it, could he not get it and send it along with you? Perhaps he will come along with you. Press him to do so. I should like to see Elizabeth and the babe very much. I have not, as yet, got the promise of any money for you, but I think that I shall succeed in getting you enough to start with; it is very hard to get hold of. If you could purchase a horse here, would you go back on horseback? Be very careful that you leave plenty of medicine for each of your patients when you come to Jersey, or they may possibly get well in your absence. Treat your opponent with kindness and respect when you come in contact with him. It does not argue well for a young man when he selects a place of settlement, and that amongst strangers, to come in conflict with those of the same profession and indulge in unbecoming epithets. An open wrangle with him would injure you, not only with the wise and sensible part of the community, but it would tend to create a counteraction against, even by those who are now your friends. We have not received a line from Hugh since the one bearing date December 24th. I heard from him. Squire Terril told me (in March) that a Mr. Randolph, formerly of Stony Hill, but now a resident of Illinois, wrote home a few days before, that a son of Judge Gaston was teaching

school in his neighborhood, and that his children were going to him. In this way I account for his continued silence, being compelled to resort to this business to get money to pay his passage home, he is unwilling to say anything about it, fearing it will transpire.

You have said nothing about church, given no particulars in relation to your village, &c. I hope you will evince a high respect for all moral institutions. Show by your conduct and general deportment something of the training you have had in life while under the parental roof, and, as you are now boarding in a public-house, I want you to remember that you are in a peculiar manner liable to be led astray in various ways. Observe the strict teetotal temperance plan: taste not, touch not, handle not. Also remember that to be a friend of the world, or to go with men of the world for the sake of popularity, you thereby must be an opposer of God, compromise conscience and endanger your well-being for time and through eternity.

Woodman and Stebbins are having the store today. I have not received my pay from them. They have cut a great swell in Somerville, but I fear they will be somewhat disgraced before they leave. I have got the naked promise of your Uncle John that my demand shall be paid—the company are indebted to Woodman and Stebbins more than enough to pay me. Steel moves in on Monday next. Elizabeth V. Dusen is to be married to Dr. Dayton this month, so says rumor. I am very desirous to get Frederick out of Somerville for the present. Bill Gaston has been home all winter. Henry Stebbins, young Beekman and one or two others are constantly in his room. I very much fear for him. He appears to be

impatient of restraint not only, but totally regardless of my advice. I say to you that I have spent the most uncomfortable winter, made so by his conduct, that I have ever experienced. He plays cards, smokes cigars and am afraid drinks with these fellows. They are frequently up till 2 o'clock at night, &c. Can't you find a place in your country where he can get a school and be removed from these wretches? I expected to have got him at Liberty Corner in a school, and study with Dr. Ayres, but it has fallen through. He appeared willing to go there. To say the least of his conduct, he is most self-willed and obstinate. I consider the prospect most desirable, under all the circumstances of the case. If Hugh returns he will have to remain home, and see what can be done towards getting him in practice, as it will be impossible for me to raise him another sum of money to start out with.

Affectionately,
W. B. GASTON.

JOSEPH GASTON
TO
HUGH M. GASTON

WAYNESBURG
January 7, 1841.

DEAR BROTHER HUGH:

I had thought that continuing a constant ripple through the medium of the *papers* would in the end be a source of more pleasure than a lengthened epistle, as the former would in its nature be hebdomadal, while the

latter would partake rather of the character of angels' visits, scarce and wide apart. But when the full tide of your full letter came upon me, like the sweeping flow of mighty waters, I yielded myself the conflicting currents of clashing conclusions, and became convinced that no species of communication could yield more pleasure than a large sheet, well-filled with such materials as one brother can collect for gratification of another. As you have abandoned the consideration of general truths, and confined yourself to an enumeration of particular parts, perhaps it may be well to notify you, that while the rain is pouring in torrents, and fast sweeping from the earth the remaining vestiges of the once-glorious sleighing, that while all animated nature (with the exception of those who possess the *devil-me-care* feeling of braving the spirit of the storm) are snugly ensconced from its rude and pitiless attacks, some in the mansions of ease and opulence, others in the hovels of poverty and want, that I, following the instinct of the general herd, have inured myself within my officinum escalapii, which, as the size is about 7 by 14; as to position, presenting to the southwest; as to contents, claiming a bed, with an unmentionable beneath it, a trunk, a table with sundry books and papers in wild confusion upon it, a corner board supporting a similar collection of sundries in much the same graceful confusion, a large ten-plate stove of an agreeable temperature, and then shelves of medicines, containing about 100 varieties, including most of the modern inventions of Pharmacy.

No vain display of trophied urn or monumental bust, no gaudy trappings nor fantastic show of drapery, no paintings snatched from the grave of ages, or sublime

conceptions of modern masters insult the walls of this apartment; no coat of mail that graced the limbs of the once-stalwart knight, the relic of ancestral pride; no sword of Toledo shape or Damascus temper to tell its tale of the gigantic power of him who wielded it; no trophies of this scene of victory, nor relic to chronicle that death of glory, here are hung—but, in their stead, a few old coats and breeches: could they speak a *tale* they might *unfold*, could they disclose the secrets of the past, what *barren aspects* would open to the sight; how *threadbare* would the trappings seem, with which we are accustomed to *invest the seats of honor*, and how vain the efforts, by any of the inventions of modern ingenuity, to escape this consideration of one *latter end*. No carpeting of costly manufacture and steeped in Persian dye is prodigally spread upon the oaken boards of this apartment, but boxes, graceful heaps of wood, and a half a score of boots and slippers, venerable in their antiquity, obtrude upon the eye, causing the visitor as he takes these several points within his glance involuntarily to exclaim, what forlorn son of Aesculapius tarries here? In the midst of this very scene, drawn with unerring truth, sits your worthy correspondent, with one foot supported upon a chair, the other perched upon the stove, while from his person his camlet overcoat, endeared by four long winters' service, falls down in graceful folds that sweep the floor. So much, then, for the matters of fact that obviously attend me as I write. You ask me how I fare as regards my business? I answer, that I have seen a great deal of practice this summer; more, I am confident, and greater of variety, than falls to the lot of most young practitioners. I have seen disease in its most aggravated

and dangerous form, as well as in some of its rarest freaks. The business I have done, if I should be at all compensated, would be sufficient to pay my way. I do not apprehend much difficulty. I am rejoiced to hear that you are making *some* progress in your profession. Plants of vigorous growth have that inherently within them, which forces them out of the shade. You have my most hearty wishes for your success. Alex is becoming a man of considerable consequence in his neighborhood. He has an extensive practice, and I think, the best practitioner in this section of the country. Fred, I suppose, has read anatomy thoroughly. He should then read *Materia Medica*. Eberle's Therapeutics is better, as it not only describes medicines, but also the diseases in which they are most suitable. Dunglison has a work on therapeutics of the greatest value, but it does not descend enough into particulars for the young student. After that it would be well to read Practice. And I do not know a more valuable work, for a young student, than Mackintosh's Practice. It is a work based upon strictly pathological principles. (Eberle's Practice is also excellent, but I think it would be well to read Mackintosh first.) The American Edition of 1837 is probably the best on surgery. The best American author that I am acquainted with is Gibson. Pancoast's edition of Wistar is the best on anatomy of American authors.

There appears to be no end to the sources of amusement held forth in Somerville. No person can be affected with ennui there this winter. There is nothing I lament more than the want of intelligent society in this place. The current of thought stagnates when there is no collision of minds or continued influx of knowledge

from the perusal of literary works. If my means would permit I would have a good library, both medical and literary, and then one of my greatest sources of regret would be removed. We have at present, however, a debating school on Saturday evenings, which affords me considerable amusement. It has this good effect, at least, that it familiarizes oneself to the sound of his voice. I find no difficulty in spinning a yarn of 15 minutes, the limit prescribed by law.

I should like very much to visit Jersey this winter, if I could make it convenient. By the way, tell Coz. Ida that I am very much obliged to her for her postscript and the bit of information it contained enveloped in a profound secret. It is decreed then that "*love's labours shall not be lost.*" For my part, so far as the girls are concerned in this section of country, I can find none to please my fancy. I have attended two weddings, and "stood up," as the saying is, and have passed through all the fire and smoke of the conflict, and yet escaped with my heart untouched. Oh! the horrid forebodings of a life of celibacy! Have you got your horse yet? I like mine more and more every day—he drives very finely in the sleigh. I think in the spring he will be a beauty. I have got a sleigh made by persons that were indebted to me. It is very neat. It cost me \$21, paid in "Pills."

What has become of Bill Brown? Is Bill Gaston still about Somerville? Fred asks me why I do not take the New World quarto? I answer, because I depend upon it for the current as well as literary news of the day, the former of which do not gain admittance into the quarto. It comes very irregularly at this office now. They are at present two numbers back. It is very per-

plexing to write so often and reiterate the same complaint. Tell Fred that the advice I have sent above, in regard to the books, would have been sent long ago had I received any intimation that he wanted information. This is the first letter of any length I have written, to the best of my knowledge, in six months!!! In fact, I compose little or none at all. There appears to be no inducement in this part of the world for much mental effort. I am studying German, when I can reconcile myself to study at all. I think I could learn to read it in a short time. I have acquired sufficient knowledge of the grammar to solve difficulties of that nature. Medical French I can read tolerably well. I will continue the papers as I receive them. I should like to see you dearly in this country. Write soon again.

Your brother,
J. G.

JOSEPH GASTON
TO
WILLIAM B. GASTON

WAYNESBURGH
September 26, 1843.

DEAR FATHER:

I received your letters, which were sent by brother Fred. I was very much pleased to see him and hear intelligence from home. I have no doubt that he will pass the winter here pleasantly and profitably. He will be enabled to see some cases of practice, and learn something of the pharmaceutical part of the profession. I am

glad to learn Hugh is getting along in his profession. His advances may be slow, at first, but I am certain that they will accelerate. Tell Will I am not unmindful of his letters and the favor of the papers he has sent me. I will answer his letter personally in a short time. In the meantime, he must progress with his studies as well as his circumstances will admit. Fred tells me you are doing a pretty fine business in the store. I am glad to hear it. My business jogs along much at the same gait it has done for some time past. This year of 1843, I take to have been somewhat peculiar in many respects, especially in this latitude. For one thing, it has been very wet and warm—yet at the same time very healthy.

We have had no summer complaints scarcely; not, in fact, much sickness of any character. Yet at the same time I do enough to make a decent living and have prospects of doing more. The greatest difficulty with me is to collect money when made. This, I find, almost an impossible thing, without resorting to coercive measures, which I do not like. In fact, I have the utmost repugnance to collect money. If I could settle up my business here, in such a way as that I should not be greatly the loser, I would then rejoice at the prospect of settling in Jersey. I should love dearly to practice there. Yet I do not see how it is possible at present to leave my present location. If I undertook to *enforce* payment of money, who owe me here, and who are abundantly able to pay me, they would no doubt avail themselves of the extreme laxity of the laws to cheat me of my dues. There is scarcely a possibility of collecting money of a man here, unless he has landed property or personal property to the amount of \$300. And they are so cautious that they

always are careful to have their possessions protected by the strong fence which the law has lain around them. Yet, at the same time, these men are mostly able to pay, and will do so, no doubt, if their own time is allowed them.

This year seems worse, to collect money, than any since I have been here, but I do not know that it is peculiar to this region of the country. Possibly things may alter by next spring, and if they do I will entertain the idea seriously of removing to Jersey. In fact, I must be guided somewhat by circumstances. I have about \$600 on my books now, and to go off without getting the greater part of this would be making me too much the loser. Fred tells me that John is studying with Mr. Miflan. I am glad to hear of it. Alex seemed very much pleased with his trip to Jersey. Is not his little daughter a lovely little thing? Give my respects to my good cousins in Somerville. Alex tells me that you intend coming over this fall. Come by all means, and you will doubtless have a very pleasant trip, and shall be entertained as well as we are able. I expect the political parties will have a pretty severe struggle this fall in Jersey. In Pennsylvania the Loco foco party will, no doubt, carry the day. I have nothing more at present to say, and remain,

Your affectionate son,
JOSEPH GASTON.

You must excuse the scrawl. I have a most execrable pen, and no knife sharp enough to mend it.

A RAINY DAY

Thee, I invoke! whose heavenly strains
First tuned to melody Chaldean's plains;
And on the zephyrs thy soft cadence flung,
Where Homer tuned his lyre, or Sappho sung.
Where every grove was vocal, and thy breath
Immortalized in song the clime of Greece.
Thee, I invoke! whose notes awhile
Have wooed the echoes of fair Britain's Isle;
Who, holding forth the trophies thou hast won,
Can boast a Milton, or a Pope, thy son.
Parent of Poetry! now deign to bless
Columbia's songster with thy fond caress;
Touch with thy magic wand his silent lyre,
Kindle his altar with Promethian fire;
Then mid the incense, and the plaintive lay,
Teach him to sing the sadness of a rainy day.
Long ere Aurora left his bed,
Or Morpheus from my eyelids fled,
The Hyades had issued forth
From their chill station in the North.
Winds led the van, and in the train,
In awful rivalry, were snow and rain;
Each to outwin had vainly striven,
And each in turn by winds were driven.
And would, in fact, have yielded mirth,
But for the sobs of mother earth;
Who, being somewhat of a prude,
Deemed it to be exceeding rude
To mar her care-worn visage, more
Than she had time to smooth it o'er;

Or plow those wrinkles deeper still,
Which oft she strove in vain to fill.
But neither sense of filial duty,
Nor tenderness for mother earth,
Could touch the heart, in mode or form,
Of these wild children of the storm—
'Till combating in mortal strife
One should have yielded up his life.
The champion, snow, made quite a stir,
Brandishing proudly his nor'wester;
But rain, himself, felt quite at ease,
Assisted by the southeast breeze,
And only sought a fitting blow
To lay his proud opponent low.
So in the hottest of the fray,
When victory loomed either way,
The wind veered suddenly around,
And snow, as quickly, gave his ground.
When rain pursued with floods of water,
And sacrificed, e'en he cried "quatre"!
Such was the combat—the event was such,
When first the bard awoke, and left his couch,
Rubbed his eyeballs, but still rubbed in vain
In hope to be convinced it was not *rain*.
While musing o'er the scene that lay before him,
Nor thought of strife, nor elemental warring.
(For from that widespread field, no one might know
That rain had ever combated with snow—
For with the vengeance of a cannibal,
He drank his blood and ate his carcass-all.)
His heart grows sick, the sad'ning charm to lose;
He heeds the *fair's* injunction, "Seek the muse."

And now that Pegasus, without much coaxing,
Hath borne me through the introduction,
I feel elated, much like he,
Who first appears in company
With all the graces, which kind nature
Doth ever give to mortal creature,
To wit: a graceless carriage, and with that
So much of bashfulness, and want of chat,
That all the girls with eyes askance,
Make up this judgment with a glance,
And quickly trumpet it all around,
That fellow's but a country clown.
But when the awe he felt, at seeing
Such august groups of human being,
Had somewhat ebbed—when all his powers,
Which bashfulness had chained for hours,
Impel him on with one accord
To utter forth a single word,
Which, when with dilitation spoke,
He finds the spell that bound him broke,
His limbs acquire mobility—
His voice its volubility.
Charmed with his powers, so long concealed,
Which accident had just revealed,
He, from the coyest of the group,
Had now more gab than all to boot;
And so delighted seems to be,
That none moves more, talks more, than he.
And so, kind reader, I confess
I'm so well pleased with my success
Thus far, that should the muse still grant
Those influences, for which I pant,

My noble powers will all be spent,
In its complete development.
As I looked forth, with visage wan,
Upon our fair, extended lawn,
The prospect filled my soul with gloom
And frantically I paced my room.
A darting pain shot through my head,
Succeeded by a *water dread*—
Or, as more ghostly, I might say,
A raging *hydrophobia*.
My eyes grew red, my cheek was flushed,
My tongue, itself, in silence hushed;
An icy coldness o'er me came,
A sudden quaking seized my frame—
And how 'twould ended, none can tell,
Had not just then the breakfast bell
Sent through the hall such sweet presages
Of buckwheat cakes and sausages.
And broke the charm with powerful weight,
Just as the clock was striking eight.
Oh, sweet reflection, to be able
To bury on the breakfast table
So much of sadness, gloom and pain,
And all the sickening thoughts of rain!

J. G.

WILLIAM B. GASTON
AND
JOHN GASTON
TO
JOSEPH GASTON

SOMERVILLE
March 24, 1846.

BROTHER JOSEPH:

It is not my intention, at present, to write you a regular letter, but only to communicate what Death has been doing in our midst. You will no doubt be much surprised and pained to learn that Uncle John is no longer among the living—but it is even so. He departed this life on Monday, about 2 o'clock P. M. He took cold in his lame leg and was confined to his bed last Friday. Brother Fred and the VanderVeers were called. The leg was much swollen and inflamed. I believe they poulticed it. He suffered intensely, but endured it with fortitude. His mind was serene and at ease. The resignation he manifested was surprising, for although he suffered beyond degree he never murmured nor complained. On Saturday night, about 11 o'clock, Fred discovered that mortification had taken place. All tried to prevent its progress, but in vain. During Sunday his voice was strong, and the appeals that he made to his children and others who approached his bedside were irresistible and heartrending. His friends were generally present. The Frelinghuysens were very kind to him throughout his sickness. He continued, however, to sink until the time above mentioned, when he was released from his pains, and (no doubt) called to peace.

O that we might all die the death of the righteous, and that our last end may be like unto theirs! My dear brother, let me beseech you to delay no longer, but now, even now while it is yet day, seek to make your calling and election sure, and secure the eternal happiness of your never-dying soul.

Your affectionate brother,

JOHN.

(Second letter enclosed)

MY DEAR SON:

John has left room for me to add a word, and shall I continue the sad tale of woe? Yes, I will, but in what I shall have to say you will perceive the picture has some bright spots in it, although the body is destined to return to earth, the disembodied Spirit is with God, his Saviour, safely housed in heaven. His funeral is to take place tomorrow (Wednesday) at 10 o'clock A. M. I will give you an account of what his sayings were, as near as I can, in his own language. On Sunday morning it was announced that he must die. We surrounded his bed. He was disposed to do all the good he could, by giving council and advice, to all who came into the room. He felt especially desirous on account of his own children, who were all present excepting Elilina and Albetta. After talking to his children, one by one—Bill was also there—he said death was always unexpected, but he was not afraid to die. He had been praying for preparation all his life. I don't know why it is so, but I have such abiding confidence and trust, and sweet peace as to desire to go. "*I know that I will get up there,*" and near the closing scene he said, "*I begin to see the land,*" meaning the heavenly inheritance. He said he had hoped to have

died on Sunday, but it is now Monday, and here I am yet, but the Lord's time is the best time. Not a murmur escaped him. Oh, how blest the righteous, when he dies! I hope and pray his parting exhortation and advice may be sanctified to us all. It would be cruel in us to wish him back to life. Think of the soul of the Godly and sinner one moment after death; and think also of the eternity of happiness and misery of each, being fixed in their eternal state; and think, also, that there is but a step between us and death. Last Thursday your Uncle was well. He took cold from wet feet, superintending repairs in the Basin at Bound Brook, and now in the eternal world of Spirits. May you follow in his footsteps as far as he followed Christ!

So prays your affectionate father,

W. B. GASTON.

WILLIAM B. GASTON
TO
JOSEPH GASTON, M.D.

SOMERVILLE
May 13, 1846.

DEAR JOSEPH:

Your letter of the 28th ult. was duly received, and I frankly confess that its perusal gave me very great pleasure and satisfaction. Why don't you write me often? You, who need make so small a requisition of your brains to fill your sheet, to me, it is like the Irishman "who worked his passage on the canal." It is a consolatory thought, that when friends and relatives are separated

far from each other, there may be still a pleasant intercourse kept alive by a commingling of sentiment and affectionate regard, through the interchange of these silent messengers. How good our Heavenly Father has been in creating us with so many avenues of pleasure not only, but also in so constituting our minds that by a proper course of discipline, we may have a large amount of rational enjoyment from the world as we pass on through life! "Use the world as not abusing it," remembering that the fashion thereof will soon pass away. If we superadd to all these true religion, our happiness, even for this life, will be increased a thousandfold, to say nothing of a well-grounded hope of blessed immortality. When you come home it will doubtless appear strange to you to find us located in the center of the village. We occupy a house erected a year ago by Farrington Barcalow for Dr. Van Duvan, who lived in it last year—he has moved to Gov. Vroom's house. Dr. Van Duvan has a large practice, but I frequently hear they don't intend to remain. He wants to go back to Renfield and his wife desires to go up the North River and locate near her father.

The house we sold to Martindell has been converted into a store, the courtyard taken away. It will appear quite strange to you. There is a good deal of building going on in Somerville. But "Raritan," the name given to the village that has sprung up as by magic at the waterpower, outstrips S. entirely. A large factory is now in progress of building there, 40 by 120 feet, brick, four stories high. It is said it will employ 100 hands at least, called in the charter "The Rope and Bagging Company of Somerville." Frederick will, in a short time, be

in the midst of a populous community. His practice is increasing. His urban and gentlemanly manner will ultimately get and secure him a large and lucrative practice. Hugh is increasing his professional business; will succeed well after a little longer effort on his part to overcome his excitability. This will, of itself, decrease with every year of his life. He is a very sound lawyer, and will secure a high reputation as counsellor. John is looking forward to the ministry; is making good progress in his studies. He expects to enter Rutgers College in the fall (the Commencement at Rutgers is July 21st. Had you not better come a little before that time?) I have some forebodings in regard to John's health. About three years ago he was with Lewis Taylor, a grain merchant in this place, and while he was with him he hurt (strained) his back lifting a sack of salt, which he has never got over. When we moved this spring the hurt was somewhat renewed. I tried to avoid it by restraining and keeping him back, but he is so persevering that he would do more than he should have done. He complains of a small place, size of a quarter of a dollar, below his shoulder blade, near backbone, as being very sore. Frederick's opinion is, that with proper care of himself he will get over it. William has commenced reading medicine, but is still with me in the store. Evelina Reynolds is here on a visit. She came alone. Her husband is to be on in July. Seyeant and his wife are also expected. Your friends at Pluckamin, Liberty Corner and Long Hill are well. Your grandmother is very desirous to see you once more before she leaves the world. There is quite a revival of religion at Pluckamin at this time. About 30 are anxiously enquiring, "What they shall do

to be saved," while the minister is pointing them (daily) to the "Lamb of God, Who taketh away the sins of the world." I have received no intelligence from Alexander since he was home. I believe he has written a short letter to Hugh. I feel anxious to hear from them. I fear that Elizabeth is not long for this world, but that, my dear son, is true of us all. What is human life? It is a vapor. I feel that my days are almost numbered. For the last two months my legs tire so soon I feel approaching decrepitude. Yes, I am perfectly sensible that the "earthly house of this tabernacle must soon be dissolved," but oh, that blessed hope that points me to the building of God, "a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens!" I can truly say with Job, "I would not live away." I will close with the Apostles' benediction, "May the Lord bless you and keep you," &c.

W. B. GASTON.

JOSEPH GASTON
TO
MISS AGNES GREENBANK

WAYNESBURG
June 2, 1846.

Agnes, may thy life's fair *morn*
Shine resplendent till it close;
May thy pathway know no thorn,
Save to guide thee to the rose.

May thine eye that beams so mild,
Never shed the pearly tear,

Save when it views misfortune's child,
Or when meek Pity lifts its prayer.

May no cloud of whitest fleece,
Float upon thy azure sky,
Save to throw in bold relief
Its spotless, matchless purity.

Though storms should mar thy sky serene,
Though lurid clouds be onward driven;
Yet may the rainbow guild the scene,
That smile of a benignant heaven.

And may thy sun whene'er it sinks,
Exhausted from life's toilsome way;
Break through the shadows of the tomb,
And dawn the bright, the eternal day.

May this some slight expression be,
Of the best wishes of your friend—J. G.

FREDERICK GASTON, M.D.

TO

JOSEPH GASTON, M.D.

RARITAN

June 14, 1846.

DEAR BROTHER JO:

There is certainly no philosophy in getting up from a dinner table to sit immediately down to pen, ink and paper, however much it may argue of brotherly love and

self-sacrificing affections. That is to say, no true philosophy. Indeed, it is (permit me to say) slapping physiology and metaphysics in the face plumb, and snapping imaginary fingers at Morpheus and full stomachs. But the crisis has arrived, and I yield me to its power. This is not a suddenly got-up thing, this writing to you. It is not an affair of today. Months have witnessed its slow maturation, and I ought to blush when I say so. I *have* felt my cheeks tingle many a time, when thinking of it, if they do not now. If I were to do as brother Alex does, write once in six months, and send three pages of apologies, with a little postscript of news, the first and foremost item in my pleadings would be that I have not written a letter to any one in a long, long time. Why? I can't tell you why. Never tried to analyze the disinclination I always have felt to write letters. And I have long ago rolled the consolatory morsel under my tongue, that I am not the *only* one in the family possessing this curious aversion. Perhaps, after all, it's only a bad habit which has grown upon us. Let me see—have I written to you since I've been here? I can't recollect, and yet it must be so. Surely I could not have been so unbrotherly. Neither do I remember of your writing to me. We are both in "glass houses and mustn't throw stones." This is a very fair beginning for an exceedingly dull missive, a proposition to which you must, and will, give immediate assent; and the only escape I see for us both is for me to launch out into the descriptive, and lay off and on, until some friendly cat's-paw of gossip strikes me broadside. You must know that this Raritan, as the Burgomasters have christened it, is a mighty brisk little place. Scarcely a week passes but two or three houses

spring up and as many new families pop into them. Houses and families, in fact, appear to drop down from the clouds. It's not so strange, though, when one comes to think what kind of houses they are, that they increase so rapidly. Being mostly of a "seven-by-nine" size, they are all built by contract, and the builder, whoever he is, throws all his forces upon one at a time. The inhabitants are principally, I might say all, working men, and for the most part poor; nevertheless, they all handle more or less money every month. But as a goodly portion of them are rogues (I speak now more particularly of those who work in the factories), or, at best, men and women who would rather keep their money than pay it out, why the fact is I do not finger much of it. The proprietors of the screw factory are not willing to reserve my bills when they make payment to the hands; and, as they are a roving set of creatures, off before you know it, I lose many little sums. The Rope and Bagging factory is in process of erection. I am not disposed to grumble, however, because I am so frequently the loser. Having succeeded thus far in pleasing the people so much better than I anticipated, and as new calls on families before attended by other physicians assure me that this must be the case, I am, upon the whole, disposed to congratulate myself with prospect of ultimate success. Rather an unusual circumstance, in the practice of young and unmarried physicians, I might mention, as indicative of the confidence which some have been pleased to place in me, and this is the number of obstetrical cases which I have had. Five cases have called upon me, and in four of them difficulty in the delivery of the placenta was present. It was in all these very adherent, requiring the slow and

steady perseverance of artificial delivery. I believe only three other cases have occurred in the village, since I have been here, in which some one of the town physicians were present. As yet, I've lost no patients, but one, now under my care, I expect will not survive many weeks. It's a case of well-marked consumption, in a young lady of rather interesting exterior; and what makes the case one of melancholy interest to me is, that she is engaged to be married. She is a pretty girl and intelligent, but no Christian, and what has given me many a harrowing thought is her total unconsciousness of danger. What a position this for a physician to be placed in! To know the peril which surrounds his patient, and yet afraid to warn her; to know that patient is unprepared for death, and yet possess not the power to enlighten her darkened understanding. Her parents have been apprised by me of her danger, but they still hope on, and still delay. . . . Good night. . . .

Wednesday—Thus far had I scribbled when I consigned my poor sheet to a neglected table drawer, where it has lain snug and cosy until now, quite forgotten. I might have completed it on Monday if it had occurred to me. Yesterday I was pretty sick and could not. Was taken sick while I was at this girl's house above spoken of just after a consultation with V. D. Veeres. Spit up some blood and vomited a good deal. Cousin Bill being informed of it (he boards in the same house I do), came in to see me, but found me asleep, whereupon he started off to Somerville, and raised such a terrific story as frightened the people half to death.

I was somewhat amused at V. D. Veere's diagnosis in this young lady's case, notwithstanding I felt so

badly. He thought it either a case of "fistula" or "liver complaint"!!! I did not think *this* of him. It might have been the proximate cause of my own attack, who knows? He recommended 15 grains of blue pill a day, carried to ptyalin, the use of porter, etc. This patient has profuse night sweats; a seated pain in the left side, which has not left her for months; sometimes, though rarely, it intermits and attacks the right side; a cough of years' continuance, always aggravated by the slightest cold, and decidedly worse than ever since Christmas last. Until within eight or ten days it has been a dry cough, but now some viscid transparent expectoration is expelled. The attacks of coughing are preceded by tickling in the trachea. Percussion gives a dull sound in the lower part of the left lung, and there is a burning in the palms of the hands and soles of the feet. Do these symptoms indicate chronic disease of the liver of any kind? If they do, I have read very negligently. Of course, I stated to him my belief of her having pulmonic consumption. This man, let me whisper in your ear, is a *very* common man viewed in a professional light, and the success(?) of his practice does not belie *my* diagnosis of *him*. Dr. Vredenburg is quite sick; has been confined to his bed for two weeks or more. I called to see him on Monday. Appears to labor under chronic bronchitis. Quite feeble. Good deal discouraged. Asked me to prescribe for him, which I did. I recommended porter as a general tonic, instead of *brandy toddy*!!! Polygala senega in decoction instead of Squibb's and ipecac, etc. The old man seemed pleased, and said he would try them. By this time you have received the joint letter of Evelina and Ida, I suppose. Ter. is very anxious to see you. She says she has

not seen you in five or six years. I need not say that father and the rest of us are quite as anxious as she to see you. It is now almost two years since you were home. Isn't that a little too bad? Just chew that question a second and see if you *can* say "No!" Besides, it is perhaps as convenient for you to be absent at this season as it would be later in the summer. You must not allow one or two obstetrical cases *in prospect* to keep you home; otherwise, you will never find time to escape two consecutive weeks from that Philoprogenitive region. Joanna Brown is approaching her third accouchment, and I was somewhat surprised a few days since, upon calling there, to find a letter for me from Brown, who has gone from home with the expectation of being absent a few days, requesting me to be with her *on that interesting occasion*. This is accounted for in this wise: Dr. Vren-denburgh is sick, and in the two Van der Veeres he has no confidence. I am expecting the summons every hour, and what makes it an interesting morceau to ruminate on is my being out of a *hoss*. My Harry is unusable at present on account of having gone through, or, rather, now being in that surgatory peculiar to horses—the "pul-leys." I expect to have him docked tomorrow, and, if I'm not disappointed in his tail, when the operation is got through with, I shall have a crack nag. He can go *his inside of a mile* in three minutes or more, and in the identical words of "Jockey Jim" he is a "*rale nice hoss*." I'm writing at 11 o'clock at night, in my drawers, and feel sleepy. Been up every night this week until twelve or one (now Friday), and, therefore, have good reason for being drowsy. Come home as soon as you can leave—don't delay. Father wants to see you very much, and

I am certain it will do him much good to see you. He has the *blues* every few days, and withal has a sore leg again. My horse stepped against his ankle and bruised the skin, and it worries him because it don't heal up right away. When you go to Brandywine, remember me affectionately to *brother A. and "Lib."* and Mrs. D., and kiss Emma an indefinite number of times for me. Is she as pretty as she used to be, and do they spoil her as much as ever?

Good night, my dear Jo, and in no other way, but by coming home immediately to see us,

Oblige yours sincerely,

FRED G.

That's a very odd windin' up, isn't it? Tell Alexander I am positively going to write to him soon. There's nothing in this, after all, is there?

JOSEPH GASTON, M.D.

TO

MISS AGNES GREENBANK

SOMERVILLE

June 25, 1846.

MY DEAR AGNES:

I hope you will not think strangely of me, should I attempt to give you some of my thoughts and impressions while revisiting the scenes of my early childhood. In fact, I think I gave you an intimation of my intention to do so before I left Waynesburgh. Somerville is vastly changed since I left it. The few patriarchs of the town that are left from the ravages of disease and death,

seem less changed than the boys and my early associates. Perhaps the reason may be, that when I think of the veterans, my mind contemplates them as having the stature of men even from my earliest recollection, while the whitened locks, the sunshine eye, the furrowed brow and the bowed form are points of the picture which do not thrust themselves prominently forward, except upon the closest scrutiny. Whereas, with the boys and my youthful associates, the case is different. To the *manly* expression of countenance has to be added the *stature* to complete the contrast. Little girls, that used formerly to venture into the street scarcely at all, without the protection of their parents, have grown into the graces and loveliness of womanhood.

The general appearance of the town is not less changed than its inhabitants. It has increased in extent and beauty with a rapidity that, to me, is surprising. The sidewalks are crowded with throngs, to which I am an utter stranger. Of the group of my particular friends and relations, the ceaseless eddies of time have thrown some into remote parts, others have sunk to rise no more, while a few yet remain to battle with its wave a while longer, e're they, too, are submerged forever. Oh, Agnes, how rapidly time is carrying us all "to that bourne where no traveller returns!" And yet there is neither *philosophy* nor *religion* in yielding to gloomy or desponding thoughts, while reflecting upon this certain catastrophe of our earthly career. The one lifts the veil that hides from the obscure vision of mortals, the beauty and beneficence that God has displayed in the world around us to cheer us in our pilgrimage; while the other, with the eye of faith, directs our enraptured gaze to that fairer world

on high, where the troubles of life are all over and the joys of immortality begin. If, then, philosophy and religion enjoin us to journey on with cheerfulness and hope, the instinct of our nature would seem to indicate that we do not indulge the spirit of selfishness nor attempt this journey alone. This world is surprisingly fair, yet it never seems half so lovely to me as when I gaze upon its beauties in the companionship of kindred spirits. But what is this world, with all its loveliness, compared to those more refined pleasures desirable from the communion of soul with soul. In the dark hour of adversity, from which so few are exempt, we need each other's sympathy to cheer us through its gloom. Whether life's journey, therefore, be prosperous or adverse, the dictates of reason no less than the voice of God declare that it is not good that we should be alone. Agnes, did you ever seriously indulge in a train of reflection like this? I confess I have frequently, since I have enjoyed the pleasure of your acquaintance. The last evening we were together you did not answer the questions I put upon that scrap of paper. I thought you seemed surprised at my boldness in presenting you such a question. You could not have been surprised, however (upon reflection), even though you might possibly have been offended. You cannot, certainly, be ignorant of, even should you be indifferent to, the state of my feelings towards you. I have long sought a fitting opportunity to express them to you fully; and one of the chief objects in my now writing is to declare with all candor and sincerity the deep and fervent love with which you have inspired my heart. I am no dissembler of the heart's warmest impulses, and it is for this reason that I presume you could not have been

ignorant of the state of my feelings. *Do you return it?* Oh, Agnes, tell me not that you "*cannot answer that question!*" If unfavorable, I suppose I must bear the blow that blasts my budding hopes of happiness with whatever of philosophy I may possess; but, if favorable, it were a sin long to suspend between fear and hope the most cherished of my thoughts. I expect I shall be in Waynesburg again on next Tuesday. You spoke to me about the possibility of your leaving for Carlisle with your father. I am not selfish by nature, and would not detract a tithe from the pleasure your visit might afford. Yet, Agnes, weeks would become months to me, without the consolation which a favorable answer to my interrogatory would afford. I hope, therefore, I shall have an opportunity of seeing you before you leave, even should you still determine upon going. I am, in person, amid the scenes of my childhood and in the society of my friends, but I hope it will not offend you should I confess that my thoughts have been holding a telegraphic communion with yourself oftener than you may possibly be aware. My friends are all well here at present, so far, at least, as I have been able as yet to visit them. There are so many changes taking place in the inhabitants and in the place itself that each time that I revisit it Somerville seems less and less the spot where I spent my most buoyant, if not my happiest, days. In a few years more I may return, should I live, as a perfect stranger. Thus wags the world. Change and alteration form its essence. How are you getting along with your quilting in your classical *attic* apartments? You must give me an opportunity of adding my mite of assistance to your tedious labors. I can hardly expect you should send me

an answer to this mass of confusion, as it takes two days for a letter from here to reach Waynesburg. But if you will ponder carefully one or two particular lines, and give me an answer from the heart when I return, I shall consider the obligation cancelled. I never was more serious in my life. It is the first time that I ever made a disclosure of my feelings to a Lady. May the answer be *Peace!* You will please excuse the disjointed manner in which this is written, and ascribe it to the peculiar influence which you have exerted over

Yours most affectionately,

J. GASTON.

JOSEPH GASTON, M.D.

TO

MISS AGNES GREENBANK

WAYNESBURG

July 14, 1846.

MY DEAR AGNES:

Your promise, so kindly made of *answering* this epistle, has made me particularly solicitous of dotting down some of my daily thoughts and evening musings for your perusal. Not that I shall be able to weave into a highly wrought web the variegated colors or adjust with tasteful elegance the thoughts that crowd upon me, but that I am entirely conscious that they will be read by you in the light of candor, while, if I know my own heart, they shall be indited in the spirit of truth. You can scarcely realize (but why should I say so, you must realize by sympathy) the soothing influence which that

little monosyllable you so lately wrote has had upon the agitated feelings of my heart. Sensations, novel and yet pleasing, are felt *there*; thoughts, fervent and glowing, spring up *there*, to which I was before an entire stranger. The first fresh offering, on Love's altar, I dedicate to thee. Never before, even in the softest murmur, did I whisper in the ear of woman the words "I love."

You did not refuse. Oh, may you never lament your acceptance of the offering! Do not think it vanity in me to say that my disposition naturally is good. My object in asserting it is your thorough acquaintance with the *lights and shadows of my heart*; for, indeed, I have a heart, sensible to the pang of grief as to the throb of joy. My disposition is essentially domestic and social. I never liked a crowd—the bustle and the strife of men, or the promiscuous smiles of woman.

In the common intercourse of the world, the benevolence of my nature induces me to treat mankind with the spirit of kindness. Yet how different is this from those social bonds that bind two kindred hearts in unity. The one is like those gentle showers which water and refresh, wherever Providence, in his beneficence, shall direct their course. The other is like a stream that perennially laves its banks, redolent with the perfume of flowers and rich with choicest fruit. I have often thought that I possess the elements of social happiness in my nature. Should it not be so, then I have studied but to little purpose the celebrated aphorism of the Greek "*Know Thyself*." These are reflections which, at the moment, may seem egotistical in their character, but I conceive they are such, my dear Agnes, as should form the subject of deep meditation to those whose future happiness is so

intimately dependent upon their due consideration. Did I not think there was a reasonable prospect, that our mutual happiness would be promoted, from the fulfilment of the pledges we have reciprocally made, what anathema would be sufficiently severe for one, who would enter the Eden of domestic Peace, pluck from its parental bosom one of its choicest plants, while at the same time he was perfectly conscious that he was about to place it in an uncongenial soil, to pine and wither, the sport of the storms and blasts of a remorseless and un pitying world. God forbid that I should do so great a sin! I feel a consciousness *within me* that the elements that will promote your happiness are *there*, and a life could not be more agreeably spent than in promoting their growth and development. I have thought proper to say this much of myself, for I wish you to know my heart. But love is not the *aliment* upon which we live, although to it we owe its sweetness; it is not the light in which we move, though to it we are indebted for all its variegated hues; it is not the soul that thinks and rules, though hence springs most of our earthly joys and our fondest emotions. Agnes, we are placed by Providence in a fair world, though we have more to do than merely to admire its beauties.

Life, it seems to me, calls especially for action and exertion. Eat thy bread by the sweat of thy brow seems rather, to me, a benevolent injunction than a vindictive curse. With a nature originally depraved by sin, should the necessities and choicest luxuries of life spontaneously cluster around our pathway, like the ignorant and dissolute nations of tropical climes, we would voluptuously revel upon the dainties of the earth; unmindful of those

duties as well as pleasures which should prompt us to promote each other's welfare and happiness; and, like the beastly herd, glut upon the good gifts of Providence as they fall around us, with scarcely an uplifted eye or heart to that hand that so beneficently supplies them. I feel that I must work, and the sentiment of manly independence, inspired by the consciousness that success in life depends on individual effort, has been heretofore, to me, the source of my purest pleasures.

Oh, Agnes, I hope in your dear self to find one further incentive to active exertion, and then, should fortune smile, our mutual joy will add new pleasure to success; and should she frown, we can, at least, solace each other under trial and affliction. I know not why it is that my thoughts run in such channels. It is true, of late, such courses have not been unusual to them. Yet it is very certain that when I sat down I had no intention of writing such a letter, though it is equally true that I intended to trace the usual current of my thoughts. But it is as rarely we can curb and direct the course of thought, as keep an ever-onward progress in our jostlings and conflicts with the world. I hope they may throw some light upon the inner man that will prove not altogether unacceptable and uninteresting to you. What I have written, I have written. Be not dissipated, my dear! Brush from your beaming eye the tear. No more may sadness leave a trace, where love has found a hiding place.

Yours most affectionately,

As ever,

J. G.

P. S.—I hold you to your promise of an answer.
Oh, give me a transcript of your thoughts!

J. G.

JOSEPH GASTON, M.D.
TO
MISS AGNES GREENBANK

WAYNESBURG
August 6, 1846.

MY DEAR AGNES:

As a rich oasis of the desert, to the traveller way-worn and dejected, came your sweet epistle to my heart, sighing for still another refreshing memento of the *green banks* (pardon the pun) and their delightful associations. It came like a bright summer day, with the light of tranquillity beaming upon it, with just enough of the fugitive clouds of sadness to give an exquisite shading to the prospect. Oh, Agnes, you can scarcely realize how much I prize that token of your remembrance. The very thought of receiving such a letter opens forth a host of pleasing reveries, and strips aside, in some measure, the veil that enshrines the priceless treasures of the heart. It tells of *promises made and promises fulfilled, of hopes cherished and fears that depress the soul. It tells of the sweet musings of the spirit, and the deep struggle between instinctive delicacy and a virtuous resolution. It tells of a father's griefs and a daughter's tears. It tells of fears hushed only in the grave, and Hope's bright future, where pleasant dreams are wandering. It tells of an object loving and an object loved.*

It tells of the path, that Christian feet have trod
Through this world's lonely wilderness, up to God.
It tells of the fervent, yet unuttered prayer,
That kindred souls should walk together there.

Oh, Agnes, is not this a bright category for the mind to muse upon? But I must stop, or I shall fill my letter with a mere recapitulation of its pleasing themes. You speak of your father's grief when he shall have been made acquainted with our mutual affection, when he shall discover that he has not *all* his daughter's love. Is this not altogether in accordance with the dispensations of a wise and benignant Providence? Does not inspiration utter forth its approving voice while it sanctions the instinct of nature's: "A man shall leave father and mother and cleave unto his wife, and the wife to her husband?" Yet, in all this, the parental or filial tie is not broken. Filial affection, I take it, is a compound sentiment, made up of a natural instinct blended with gratitude for benefits conferred; but love, if I may so speak, is more spiritualized. It is brighter and more exalted sentiment. It does not detract from the force and fervor of filial affection, while it strengthens its wings by giving a higher and more constant range for flight. Filial affection, like the smouldering fire, burns on silently, yet enduringly, till the last spark expires; but love bursts into a flame and sheds forth its light, while its heat exhilarates and enlivens, though in truth it never burns so brightly as when based upon the living embers of filial affection. The child that loves not father and mother has but little of the treasures of the heart to bestow upon another. The one, in my opinion, is not at all inconsistent with the full and perfect exercise of the other. Your father will undoubtedly feel a pang at the first mention of the subject, but I think he cannot but readily acquiesce in a conclusion so natural and so intimately associated with our prospects of earthly happiness.

Without an insuperable objection against myself personally, he will perceive that it is a train of thought, that in the ordinary course of nature, at some time sooner or later, would almost inevitably be presented for his consideration. Yet, at times, I have thought I observed a coldness in his manner that almost chills the current of my soul, when I think that my earthly happiness is dependent upon the favorable reception he may give to my proposal. Though occasionally these transient shadows flit across my mind, the light of love will still burst forth afresh; and, with its cheering beams, bid me hope on, hope ever. If he have any objection, I think it will be based upon the truth you have so delicately hinted at in the closing paragraph of your letter. Though the child of devotedly pious parents, though the subject of ten thousand fervent prayers, yet I am not a Christian. Oh, Agnes, I had a mother (I do not recollect whether I ever told you anything about her in particular) for whom I felt an affection of its kind, such as I scarcely think it possible for me to indulge again for any earthly object. It was a sentiment compounded of filial affection, of veneration for holiness and Christian virtues, of pity for prolonged suffering (she was an invalid for years before her death) that can be borne without murmuring, only by those who bear it with meekness, the cross of Christ and are ready at a moment's warning to soar to the fair climes of immortal felicity. For weeks before her death I was a constant attendant at her bedside. I watched the light of life as it flickered in its socket. When too feeble more to read the Scriptures, at her request, I read to her chapters of the epistles she would name, eminently calculated to buoy the Chris-

tian spirit in its hour of sorest trial. And just before her death, with holy triumph, heard her exclaim, "My sufferings will soon be over, soon shall I be in heaven!" You will not wonder that I loved such a mother. I always feel that I am a better man when I think upon her. And, if the effectual, fervent prayer of the righteous availeth much, I cannot, will not doubt, that God in His mysterious Providence, will reclaim the wandering prodigal and bring him back to His Father's House. Agnes, I cannot help feeling serious when I think of this subject. I am a poor dissembler of the heart's emotions. Religion is a serious subject. Death, oh, how serious! And should not love be serious, when the earthly happiness of two hearts, perchance their immortal felicity, hangs upon the issue? My dear Agnes, you seem to think there may be sin in loving. Is not God love? Is it not the redeeming quality of fallen human nature? Does not Christ bid us "Love each other"? Oh, yes; I believe that God looks with an approving smile upon two loving hearts, the only gem of paradise that has survived the fall. Space forbids that I should go on further.

Yours most affectionately,
J. G.

P. S.—You will answer this. I know you will, although there be nothing in it particularly to answer. I love to see your *thoughts* on paper. They are companions to me in lonely hours. In looking this letter over, it has a sad'ning appearance. Oh, pardon it, as I know you will, though it cost a tear. I am not sad, I am most happy in your love; yet I feel anxious to learn

what those others, whom it may concern, think of it; that is, our confession of attachment.

J. G.

Write soon, write much, write as you did.

J. G.

JOSEPH GASTON, M.D.
TO
MISS AGNES GREENBANK

WAYNESBURG
August 20, 1846.

DEAR AGNES:

I know not whether I have read your letters for the twentieth or fiftieth time. As the heart, being intoxicated with excess of pleasure and without being able to particularize the separate emotions, sums it all up in the general word delight; as the eye, when riveted upon some fair and extended landscape, finding itself unable to say this or that point as most worthy of notice, causes us instinctively to exclaim how grand, how beautiful this prospect! So when I read your letters I am at a total loss to designate this or that paragraph as affording superior zest or pleasure. When you speak of your fears, your griefs and your tears, how can I resist the pleasing emotions that I have an interest and a claim upon a heart endowed with such exquisite sensibility? When you speak of your hopes, your joys and your prospects, how can these hopes fail to elate, these joys to gladden, these prospects to delight my heart, for they seem mine own; but when love forms this pleasing theme, all thought, all

cares vanish, too, me seems. So, poor I, vainly hope to tell the emotions that my "bosom fill, but hold my heart, however fair, oh, Agnes, see your image there!"

You say you fancy your last letter will not please me. How can you be so unjust to my heart's appreciation of its merits! The expression seems so unlike yourself that I must chide you for it. What, not be pleased with the expression of that moral excellence, which far exceeds the Golden Rule that bids us *love each other as ourselves*? You say you love some better, one far more, than your dear self, and without whom life, to you, would be as death itself. Would that I were even worthy of that love, for we should not think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think, but soberly. Neither have I the vanity to suppose that I approach within an infinite distance of that perfection, which you seem disposed, enthusiastically, to attribute to me. I very much doubt the possibility of attaining perfection in this world, though I must readily admit that religion approximates us more nearly to that blissful state, because in the crying want of it we *approach* more nearly to that paragon of every good—the perfect God Himself. If we were perfect in this life, would we ever desire to leave it? Would we not cling, with still greater tenacity, to a state of things experienced, than fly to others that we know not of? You say that in making a recent investigation of the state of your heart, you have discovered degrees of love of which before you were entirely unconscious. You had thought you were cold and destitute of sensibility. My dear girl, I believe it is but rarely that the treasures of the heart are discovered to their possessors without them being the cause of producing sadness in

one. I must desist, before I produce the same effect upon yourself.

Yours affectionately,
J. G.

JOSEPH GASTON, M.D.
TO
MISS AGNES GREENBANK

WAYNESBURG
August 22, 1846.

MY DEAR AGNES:

What creatures of circumstance we are! The slightest breath of air changes the course of our bark; shoals impede our progress, rocks threaten destruction, and, these obstacles once perchance surmounted, we glide into the deep waters of security and peace. How slight a discord is sufficient to mar the sweetest notes of melody! How small a blemish detracts from the loveliness and grandeur of the fairest landscape! And in the moral world, how trifling a circumstance obscures the sunshine of the soul with clouds and darkness, or affords to the heart, wracked with disquietude and pain, the balm of peace and consolation. My dear girl, am I the same person I was when I first made your acquaintance? Oh, no. A "change has come o'er the spirit of my dream." We are not the same today we were yesterday or a week past.

Each fleeting moment leaves its impress as it hurries by, and, chameleon like, our hearts are subject to every shade and hue of coloring. Yet with all this variety of

shading, with all this impressibility by casual circumstances, we have still the same personal identity. The same rudimental features mark our countenance, though subject to every fitful emotion. Our hearts bear the impress of its original molding, though affected with every variety of impulse and contending passion. Not that we are *really* changed, but just so far as circumstances can effect us. As the moon is still the same, though presenting to the eye a continual succession of alterations and phases; as the ship is still the same, though borne this course or that, though braving the tempest or lulled in a calm; as this world is still the same, though presenting blossoms in spring, fruit in summer, sear and yellow leaves in autumn and in winter the cheerlessness and gloom of the grave itself—I feel a consciousness that I am the same person I was a year past, but how *changed* are my feelings, hopes and prospects! Then I *felt* as a comparative stranger in a strange land. Friends in the worldly acceptance of the term I flattered myself I had, but in its more exalted and legitimate sense I *felt* as if I were alone. No ear was open to receive the secret musings of the soul, no heart to sympathize in my hours of sadness or participate in my moments of happiness and joy. Like a messenger of peace, you crossed my pathway. I have told you the time when, and the place where.

An indescribable charm, with which the soul lit up your countenance, first arrested my attention. I had passed into the crowd accidentally as well as listlessly. A few moments to be spent in jollity and mirth, and as speedily forgotten, was the utmost of my expectations. But I saw your face and I was *changed*. I addressed to you a few passing words. Your own sweet voice I

heard. My heart echoed the pleading tones, and I *felt* I was not *alone*. Here, thought I, is a *flower* that has bloomed in loveliness, and shed its fragrance upon the Green bank; my bosom will prove a congenial soil. Might I not venture the attempt to transplant so fair an exotic there, that the wilderness of my heart may also blossom as the rose? We met again. A crowd had rambled to the mountain. The echoes awoke the sounds of joy and gladness. Mirth played on every countenance. But whilst we strolled to gather berries that hung in clusters around us, or clambered to the top of that stupendous pile of rocks, to gaze upon the prospect that lay in dim perspective spread out before us, I *felt* a change *was wrought* within me. In the deep solitude of my heart your image had risen. It were no sin, methought, to cherish and detain it there. I sought a more intimate acquaintance and obtained it. The *flower* that seemed so lovely when viewed at a distance, upon a nearer scrutiny, expanded its *petals* with a richer lustre, and shed a sweet perfume which charmed and captivated my senses. How I have loved, how I have *felt* since then! In some secluded nook or corner of the heart I hope you have kept the *record*. Oh, Agnes, these are *some* of my *feelings*, but how far short of the vast aggregate that has swelled and heaved my bosom for months past, like huge waves of troubled waters! I said my *Hopes* were changed. Some are changed into fruition. The Apostle says *that which a man hath, why doth he yet hope for?* My heart, like Noah's dove, had long hovered over the watery waste of this world in search of a resting place, but had found it not—when lo! the window of your breast was opened, and its weary pinions there found an asylum of

repose. This was a hope realized. But Hope is a *plant* that grows spontaneously in the human breast. Those that *wither* in the germ, as well as those whose fruit arrives at full perfection, are quickly succeeded by successive crops that are just starting into being. *I believe you love me.* This is the cornerstone upon which all my hopes are reared. Without this, all were built upon a sandy foundation, and the whole superstructure but as the "baseless fabric of a vision." But with this *sure foundation* my hopes, like columns and porticos with all the ornaments of a refined architecture arise, only to add new grace and beauty to the structure I am contemplating with admiration and delight. Need I particularize the separate objects of Hope? That which now stands prominently forward, in my mind's eye, concerns the favorable reception your father may give to my proposal. The thought of parting from his "most affectionate and obedient child" will doubtless cause his pious heart to throb, but why may not Hope afford to him also its charming consolation? He surely, my dear girl, will consult your happiness, and in consulting it he will not do me the injustice to doubt that my constant efforts will be directed to its promotion. Oh, then, let our hearts cherish the pleasing thought, until all doubts are dispelled by the *full assurance* of Hope! My *prospects*, too, are changed. But I have not *space* to enlarge upon so pleasing a theme. It will afford to us both, I trust, many an evening's joyous musing. For the present, however, I must close, trusting you will ever believe me.

Yours most affectionately,

J. G.

P. S.—You will not refuse me the boon I crave of

some more of your passing thoughts? Use no *art* or *womanly device* to check the tide of thought, but let them flow on pure and free as the gurglings from the fountain. Have I not a right to your *thoughts*? Not the counterfeit or half-stifled expression of them. Dear Agnes, be honest with your heart's emotions, and at any rate do not forget to answer this feeble but willing effort to comply with your request. Watchman, what of the night? Answer: Day doth not break until *Wednesday evening*.

Adieu.

J. G.

JOSEPH GASTON, M.D.
TO
MISS AGNES GREENBANK
"I DO NOT CARE"

'Tis true, I plighted him *my word*,
'Tis true, his love *he owned*;
My ear delightedly hath heard
Love's accents sweetly toned;
Yet jealousy hath said, Beware!
I spurn his love, "*I do not care.*"

'Tis true, my heart its doubts *had raised*,
'Tis true, he constant seemed;
And when my charms he fondly praised,
His eye, oh, how it beamed!
And yet *they say*, he lays a snare
To catch *two birds*, "*I do not care.*"

What—do not care! Oh, recreant heart
To love's firm plighted troth!
I grieve that jealousy should part
Hearts of such sterling worth.
Beyond all doubt, did he not swear
His constancy, "*Oh, yes, I care.*"

WAYNESBURG

Monday evening, August 24, 1846.

MY DEAR AGNES:

Upon coming home this evening, though the storm had just passed away and bright sunshine had gilded the *rainbow*, emblem of peace, the pendant boughs and drooping herbage, yet glittering with nature's tears, told my heart too plainly the desolation that had just swept by, and the almost providential manner in which calamity had been averted. I could not think of *sleep*, so I must needs think of *thee*.

The few words quoted above *touched* my heart. I did not *then*, I do not *now*, believe them the genuine expression of your feelings, yet there was something in their *sound*, so utterly discordant with what mine would have been, had I, for a moment, harbored the doubt of your constancy, which you *seem* to have indulged in reference to mine, that I could not banish them from my thoughts, and my thoughts have almost unconsciously interwoven them into lines above written. The words quoted in the last line of the closing stanza are such as I presumed you might have used, after hearing my full and free explanation of the *causes* of your doubts. I hope I have not done injustice to your *feelings* in my attempt to give them *utterance*. I am most heartily re-

joiced that you have given me occasion to disabuse your mind of the blighting effects of a gossip breathing such utter malignity. I feel as innocent "as does the babe unborn" of the *base purpose* they have charged me with. I never violated in *thought* or word the holy vow of firm, unalterable love I made to thee. Oh, Agnes, you can scarcely know *the treasures of the heart* I have unconditionally left to your disposal! Most willingly I give them *all*—slight not the offering. I do not feel offended, I am not grieved, yet I feel *sad* that *you* could doubt my love. *You*, who must hold in memory's chamber so many trophies your charms had wrested from my heart. Oh, do "*believe*" me!

Yours,
J. G.

JOSEPH GASTON, M.D.
TO
MISS AGNES GREENBANK

WAYNESBURG
Saturday, August 29, 1846.

MY DEAR AGNES:

How strangely constituted are our hearts! With *some*, the *fire of affection* smoulders on without a palpable manifestation, till life is extinguished in the grave. In *others*, it emits but a feeble and flickering light, scarcely sufficient to exhibit the features or warm the feelings of the one destined, by nature, to cherish and protect it. In *others*, again, it bursts into being with the glare of a meteor, dazzles where it should enlighten, burns where

it should exhilarate and suddenly expires, leaving to wreck and ruin the object it should have safely conducted down the pathway to the tomb. And then in *others*, with a *steady, pure and brilliant* light, perpetual as the vestal fire of old, it sheds a genial radiance over the heart, illumines the verdant fields and lovely *green banks* of the world, and, even in the night of adversity and hour of death, lights up the roughness of the way, and pours forth a holier and more cheering beam the *deeper the gloom* with which it is surrounded. Oh, Agnes, I feel *this flame* is now burning in our hearts! Let us watch it with an "Eastern devotion" that it may never be extinguished. There must be some witchery about you, my dear girl, for I can scarcely content myself any more, save in your presence. I can now appreciate the feelings of one who, by the vigorous sentence of the law, is forced to endure banishment from the country, scenes and objects that he holds most dear on earth. The keenest pang is not awakened by the hardships to which his exile has subjected him, but from the severance of those *ties* which have grown with his growth, and entwined their *tendrils* about his heart even from his earliest infancy. You would not chide me for not coming oftener if you were *perfectly* acquainted with the feelings I have to struggle with to stay away at all. The time is not far distant, I hope, when the veil that now separates us shall be removed, and the communion of kindred souls shall be pleasant and perpetual. You say truly your father has given his assent. I cannot, in this letter, tell you all the conversation to which the subject gave rise, but will avail myself of the first opportunity that offers. I love him the more for the very objections that suggested themselves

to his mind, for they have convinced me more thoroughly of the inestimable worth of your heart in which all my affections are centered. Oh, the holy ardor of soul he exhibited for your spiritual welfare! The Christian sympathy he manifested that I was not what I should be, and the prayerful hope he expressed that when the toils of life were over our souls should together mount to the richer and more enduring joys of heaven. This *hope* I have ever cherished as an anchor to my soul. Will it not be dearer still, now that your felicity has come as an additional freight to my bark? You mention the circumstance of our encountering each other upon the camp ground. We held no converse, but my heart, true to its instinct, like the Star in the East, followed you through the maze of human forms and stood over the place where my Agnes was. How unconscious we are at times of the *emotions we excite in others!* This brings to my recollection an incident that happened one day about noon, when the grand mass were strolling about in thoughtlessness and vanity. I had seated myself, from very weariness, on one of the benches of the middle isle, near the top of the camp ground, and for support was reclining against a large oak that stood there. William Davis (Joseph Davis' brother) was at my side. Our attention had, for a time, been engaged by the throng that was passing and repassing, and indulging in all the folly and worldly-mindedness incident to a giddy and promiscuous crowd, such as at that time was sauntering about. We had gazed upon the scene for some time, and, like the rest, had been making our remarks upon the persons in review before us, when, solemnly and alone, I marked a female advancing toward the spot where we were sitting.

As she drew nearer I observed it was his sister. She stopped a short distance from us and beckoned him to her side. She opened the conversation with him by laying her hand upon his shoulder. The subject, I saw, was *religion*. My attention was riveted to the spot. His form bent with the consciousness of guilt, his head drooping. *Her* face, however, was toward me, and her countenance was shining with that lustrous light that beams only upon the features of those whose God is reconciled. It was eloquent. Oh, how she importuned that brother! Not a word was audible from the place where I sat, yet it seemed as if in the fervor of her soul she were saying, "Come with us and we will do thee good." "How can I give thee up, oh, my brother!" I believe the arrow then pierced his heart. I felt my own was touched, and had a sister or some friend—oh, Agnes, had you then, like a ministering angel, stood at my side and in accents of tenderness bid me arise, I believe the shackles would have fallen from my feet, and I should have arisen a free man in the Lord. But I looked about me and no one seemed interested in my condition, and even *she who had excited the emotions in my breast seemed totally unconscious* of the effect she had produced upon the heart of the stranger. And, though the seed was sown, the fowls of the air were quickly hovering about ready to devour it. Thank God that hour and scene often returns to my mind even yet, as the harbinger of good things to come! I saw nothing on that camp ground so affecting as that sister's eyes melting in tears, and that intense ardor of soul depicted upon her countenance, while pleading for that prodigal brother's speedy return to his *Father's* house. But you lamented you had been the innocent

cause of producing sadness in me, so I must desist, before I produce the same effect upon yourself.

Ever yours most affectionately,
J. G.

P. S.—I have taken up so much space in telling my story that I have not room to answer explicitly all the topics hinted at in your letter. I fear you have taken quite too seriously to heart the conversation we had on Monday evening last. Upon reflection, I can readily perceive that you have been sorely tempted by the malice of others to do injustice to my feelings; but now that we understand each other I enjoy peace in my heart. The *origin* of that piece of poetry I never believed truly expressed your feelings, but it threw my heart into the shade, and I gave you the lines because I thought it would be profitable to view me under the cloud, as well as in the sunshine of tranquillity. Oh, forgive me for ever having written them. When I read them over the next morning I could not believe but that you would *ever care*, doubt not that we are *now friends*. Oh, Agnes, I appreciate the feelings with which the latter part of your letter was written. I can pardon its brevity on that account. Everything is indeed *changed* since we became acquainted, but though the changes that have and may take place may excuse your “agitated” feelings, let them not give occasion to gloom and despondency. I never was more serious in my life, but I am not of the number of those who are “Sad without Hope.” I have an *object* worthy of my fondest, warmest affections, and, though I have given them all away, yet I feel not impoverished, for I have the rich treasures of your heart as my recom-

pense. I have no more space.

Adieu, my dearest,

J. G.

Will you not answer this? I cannot doubt it till I hear you say so. Oh, let me see another sheet stamped with the fresh impress of your thoughts and feelings!

J. G.

JOSEPH GASTON, M.D.

TO

WILLIAM B. GASTON

August 31, 1846.

DEAR FATHER:

A considerable time has elapsed since I have received any communication from Somerville.

Shortly after my return from visiting you, Fred was pleased to send me a letter, and at this time I am unable to say whether I answered it or not. My impression is strong that I did. Whether I did so or not, you may assure him that I shall write again shortly. My object in writing to you at this time, father, is to communicate a piece of *intelligence* which has occupied my thoughts for a long time past, to the almost entire exclusion of every other subject, and perhaps it may afford a sufficient apology for my *seeming neglect* since my return. About a year ago I became acquainted with a young lady, the daughter of Mr. Greenbank, a clergyman, residing in this place. The intimacy which had existed for a time, by subsequent attractions, produced an attachment which has ripened into love. Her name is *Agnes*.

You may readily suppose that I am not one of those who heedlessly and thoughtlessly rush into the toils, the fascinations of woman are everywhere spreading for the feet of the unwary. With a heart by nature easily susceptible of impressions of this character, I can frankly and truly say, though I have been thrown by circumstances into a variety of scenes, seen something of the world, and mingled much with "fair women and bold men." Until *now* I have preserved my *integrity*. I have not loved. To say that she is *fair* would be but meager praise from me, who, in my travels, have seen much of the mere extraneous beauty and loveliness of Eve's daughters. She is *more*—she is *good*. It was the quality of her heart that first particularly arrested my attention. To manners refined, intelligence and good sense, a heart affectionate and devoted, youth and beauty, she has the additional charms that make the Christian character, all combining to make her *worthy* of what she now possesses—my warmest affections. I *could not*, neither will you, fail to admire and love her. Her parents are both natives of England. Her father is a regular graduate of medicine of the University of Pennsylvania. He felt called by conscience to preach the Gospel, and therefore abandoned a more lucrative profession for one of more *general* and *permanent usefulness*, while at the same time it affords him the sweetest of all consolations, the consciousness of doing his duty. He is a man of firm mind and an excellent preacher. Like most of the early followers of Christ, he has gone forth into the world without scrip and without purse. I believe he is poor, but the wealth of the world could hold out no allurements to me, without I could discover in its pos-

essor much of that *moral worth* of his daughter, whom I love. I have made an engagement of marriage. You, I think, can have no serious objections. I had not received a definite answer to my proposal when I visited you, or I should *then* have spoken to you on the subject. Write me speedily your thoughts on this subject, and oh, will you pray that it may result in our mutual and permanent happiness? Nothing is as yet definitely settled save my proposal and its acceptance. I await your speedy answer with anxious solicitude.

Your loving son,
J. G.

JOSEPH GASTON, M.D.
TO
MISS AGNES GREENBANK

WAYNESBURG
September 2, 1846.

MY DEAR AGNES:

When I gaze on the world so wondrously fair,
And see beauty and loveliness pictured there;
When I turn my wrapt eye on the deep blue sea,
Spread out like a mirror so tranquilly,
I think of thee.

When I list to the song of birds in the bowers,
When I wander in groves perfumed with flowers,
When I look on the stars in the stilly night,
And mark *one* radiant with heaven's own light,
I think of thee.

When I hear the sweet murmuring song of the stream,
As it merrily glides through the meadows so green;
Or when falls on my ear the notes of the breeze,
As with touch like a fairy, it plays on the trees,
I think of thee.

In the stillness of night when solitude reigns,
And *memory* hath bound all my thoughts in her chains;
I smile on my fetters, I would not be free—
Such *chains* are my choice, bonds are bliss unto me
While thinking of thee.

And he, who thus muses, *remembered* would be
By the *fair one*, who plighted her love to J. G.

WILLIAM B. GASTON
AND
JOHN GASTON
TO
JOSEPH GASTON, M.D.

SOMERVILLE
September 3, 1846.

MY DEAR SON:

Your letter of the 31st ult. is received. I was not a little surprised—agreeably, too, I confess—in scanning its contents, and examining sentence by sentence the description and character of the fair one you speak of. Marriage being an institution of God, ordained by Him for the happiness of man, declaring that “it is not good for man to be alone,” and being an institution which

will be continued to the end of the world, it must be right. In my observation through life I have been led to believe that, in the majority of cases, those have done best (I mean in a worldly point of light) that married early in life. It has a tendency to concentrate our efforts to a particular point, and to induce us to husband the avails of our hard earnings for the temporal comfort and happiness of our families. Besides, I believe, when men have thus acted, home has been to them doubly attractive. They have been kept out of temptation, where, instead of spending their leisure time in taverns and places of amusement, they have been found at their own altar and fireside. I think I can truly say that of the thirty-three years I have been at the head of my family that I have not spent in all this time thirty-three hours in public houses, unless I was traveling or doing public business in them. I unhesitatingly give my cordial consent to your contemplated union to Miss Agnes G., relying upon your good sense, having arrived at that time of life when, by due consideration and reflection with the lights you possess, I think you are fully competent so to judge of character as to make your own choice. Besides, when I take in the account the length of time you have been pondering the subject, and from daily observation and intercourse with the young lady and her family, I feel satisfied, and pray to the Giver of every good and perfect gift that He will so replenish your hearts with grace and the satisfying influences of His Holy Spirit as to make you mutual blessings to each other.

Affectionately,

W. B. GASTON.

N. B.—You had better not make a wedding. Do up

the business in a very quiet way. I may not be able to visit you till in October. I can't stand hot weather.

W. B. G.

BROTHER JOSEPH:

Permit me to add a few lines to those which Father has already written.

As the attainment of happiness is the grand spring of human action, it is surprising that inattention is so apparent in the generality of mankind to that most important concern in their lives, the choice of a wife. A choice in which not only their terrestrial welfare, but even their everlasting felicity may depend.

This choice, I understand, you have just made, and I have no doubt but that the selection has been accomplished with the utmost care. I found this belief upon your age, judgment and sound sense.

Taking this view of the case, I do most sincerely pray that happiness and prosperity may attend you and yours, not only through this life, but also in the one to come. But my object in writing has been neglected. I expect to go to New Brunswick on the first day of October. Father is still feeble (although much better than when you were here) and needs exercise. Now that which I have to say is simply this: If you can possibly arrange and order things in such a manner, so that the affair above spoken of may be consummated any time between now and the first of October, I think I can promise you the enjoyment of Father's company upon that most interesting occasion. It will be almost impossible for him to leave after I am gone.

Eveline has returned to Meadville. Mr. Reynolds,

the Dr. and his wife remained at Mr. Brown's about three weeks. When they returned they took Catherine with them. Mrs. George H. Brown was delivered of a son a few hours before the Dr. arrived. Fred officiated, to the satisfaction of all interested. He is doing well. Hugh has been appointed Master in Chancery—is also doing well. The friends are about as usual. Write soon.

Your affec. Brother,

JOHN.

HUGH M. GASTON
TO
JOSEPH GASTON, M.D.

SOMERVILLE

September 3, 1846.

DEAR JOS.:

Well, caught at last, eh? Poor fellow! I do not know whether most to compassionate you that you are enslaved, bound hand and foot, or to admire the unsophistication of your character that makes you hug your chains. Blinded, too—as blind as a bat in Egyptian darkness, and yet think everything as light as day. It amuses me to read your strong and emphatic eulogy of your enslaver, as if your opinion or judgment upon such a point were worth a straw. Why, my poor blinded brother, know you not that all this *colour de rose*, these prismatic hues, are all mere symptoms of *your* disease, indicative of the amiable weaknesses of *your* heart? But which ought not, and would not, by “any intelligent jay of the country,” be of the least weight as indicative of *her*

merits. Alas, for poor human nature! Seriously, you will gather from my jesting that I have seen your letter of the 31st ult. to father. I congratulate you upon the matter therein disclosed. I congratulate you that your heart has not been so cauterized and deadened by the thumps and knocks of this every day world as to be insensible to the most pure and exalted of human feelings and sympathies. I congratulate you, that she, who has exerted these feelings, is of a good heart and of a refined and intelligent mind. I agree with you, that these are better than a mine of gold or a kingdom for a dowry. Write me when the "annexation" is to come off, for, though this annexation may have the effect to perpetuate slavery in one sense, yet I shall be glad to be there to assist in the formation of the treaty. Nothing new here. Court is just over. John goes to Brunswick next month. Generally healthy. Town's dull and many having left a pleasuring. Have not heard from Charley Wedges lately. Annie's so-so. Dumont Frelinghuysen appears, from his business (or the want of it), to be appreciated. Brown is well, and family. I would not be surprised if he went to the Senate in Miller's place.

Your affectionate brother,
H. M. GASTON.

JOSEPH GASTON, M.D.
TO
MISS AGNES GREENBANK

WAYNESBURG
Friday, September 4, 1846.

MY DEAR AGNES:

Your *request*, I hope, shall ever be a sufficient motive to arouse me to *action*. How much rather then, when the *compliance* affords to my own heart the *pleasure* I invariably experience in addressing you.

To a third person the secret musings we have held on paper, and the attempt to trace the currents of thoughts as they rise and flow through our minds, might seem trifling, and particularly so when the medium of personal intercourse is so rich and so truly a feast to the soul.

A reason, however, which I feel disposed to dignify with the epithet *philosophic* suggests itself to my mind whenever the profit or propriety of this correspondence is mooted. It is this, that through it I am blessed with your *perpetual presence*. In delineating my thoughts upon paper the *object* addressed stands pictured in native grace and loveliness before my mind. That eye, which as an emanation of the soul sparkles with joy, or glitters with a tear; that voice, which vibrates on my ear with dulcet tones of melody; that form, endowed with the bright charms of woman, each, all are fashioned into life and decked with the rich drapery which love alone can furnish to the fancy. In writing to you, it is as though I addressed you face to face. But why attempt to convince you that it affords me pleasure to write, when the

length and frequency of the letters with which I have taxed your patience are alone sufficient to attest it. You asked me a question the other evening, my dear Agnes, which is richly worthy of my most serious and honest consideration. "Doctor, will you *ever continue* to love me?" My object at present is not to discuss the question, for I have without hesitancy and from my heart honestly answered it already in the affirmative, but rather to state to you some of the *reasons* which, upon reflection, have afforded to my mind convincing proofs of the *sincerity* of the answer I gave you from the *impulse* of my feelings. My first reason is founded upon the nature of *my own heart*. You say most truly that I have carefully weighed the consequences of the course I have been pursuing for months past. In the *retrospect*, my mind dwells upon the *unalloyed pleasure* I have experienced, and *this* gives me the surest presage of *its* continuance for the future. When I look *within* and discover the thoughts and emotions that have sprung up there under your *genial influence*, where before all was desolation and barrenness, I cannot doubt the *quality of the soil*. The germs were there, but impenetrable night had prevented their growth and development. Will you not ever continue to shine as a sun upon my pathway, and will not these germs ever grow in strength and beauty, and prove a perpetual harvest for the time to come? Hypocrisy is a plant that is not indigenous to my nature. If it be lurking there, I have not discovered it. In your investigations (and I wish you for the sake of your future peace to investigate it most carefully) have you ever discovered it? You have not, of this I am confident. Then how can I distrust the spontaneous emotion of my heart, or doubt for a

moment that I will ever continue to love you? But more particularly I ground my confident assertion upon the nature of *your own heart* and the treasures of affection with which I daily discover it so richly to abound. No mother ever more devotedly marked the first feeble manifestations of intellect in her darling child than I have watched the growth of the affections, as they expanded in loveliness and shed their genial influence upon your countenance and conduct. You say most truly you have not the *art* to dissemble your emotions. Your face is a living epistle known and read, at least, by me. I see filial affection, sensibility and intelligence, but above all *goodness* pictured there, and are not *these* worthy of the heart's warmest affections, and, while *they* are *indelibly stamped* upon your countenance, think you that I can ever cease to love you? Your heart will echo the words of my mouth *never, never*. Surely I have seen nothing molded in the form of woman more worthy of my love. You say you are young and have never experienced the troubles of the world. It is true, my dear Agnes, you are young, yet still old enough to have developed the most cherished affections of our natures. You have discovered *somewhat* of the value of your own *heart*, and have bartered it for *one*, I will not say of the inestimable worth of yours, yet still I hope you will never discover while *life shall last* that I have *taken advantage of your youth*, or cheated you, in this your first exchange of the affections. With respect to difficulties and troubles, we can scarcely expect not to encounter them as we advance in the journey of life. But difficulties met and encountered, troubles felt and alleviated, become sources in the future of security and joy. When we look back upon

obstacles that have been surmounted, they give a presage of success over those that are to come. When we think of troubles we have once experienced, but from which we are now exempt, do they not assure us that, though thick darkness may surround our pathway, the sunshine of peace and joy will surely follow? "True magnanimity," as Goldsmith says, "does not consist in *never falling*, but in rising every time we fall." I do assure you that so far as *my efforts* can effect it, you shall experience as few as possible of the troubles and trials which are the common inheritance of humanity.

Yours ever most affectionately,

J. G.

You speak of the *lightness* and frivolity of youth as though they were qualities that would *not suit me so well*. To my mind they are as the brilliancy of the diamond, which captivates the eye, without in the least detracting from the sterling value of the gem. I most heartily wish it were not such a *task for you to write*, at least to me. You say the time was when you could compose your thoughts, but now you sit absorbed in seriousness. Why is it so? Oh, that I were with you in those moods, that I might read your thoughts upon your countenance, if I am to be debarred from the pleasure of their utterance. That poetry I shall expect, and perhaps will be a better, certainly a more disinterested judge, as to whether it is *worth the trouble of writing* it; though, in advance, I am disposed to accord with you in sentiment *that it is very good*. When you sit down to answer this letter (and, as you say, *of course you will answer it*), you must not intend from the beginning to *make it rather a short epistle*. Give me your thoughts as they drop, sparkling and bright,

like genuine coin from the mint of your mind. I will always receive them at their *par* value, perhaps may pay you a *premium*.

Adieu,
J. G.

P. S.—I am afraid I tire you with my letters, you seem so *reluctant* to *answer* them. If so, I pray you intimate the fact more positively, that in this, as in every other instance, I may be guided by your wishes. I think you would not be so reluctant could you fully appreciate the valuation I place upon them.

Again adieu,
J. G.

JOSEPH GASTON, M.D.
TO
MISS AGNES GREENBANK

WAYNESBURG
Saturday, September 9, 1846.

MY DEAR AGNES:

I never was more agreeably surprised than upon receiving your letter last evening. But when I saw its length, and eagerly devoured the sentiments so chastely and delicately set forth, I feel that I must trust to your own heart to disclose what by language I am unable to express—the exquisite pleasure I experienced. Besides, the array of rich thought with which you have indulged me, I have confirmed my own mind, by its perusal, in some ideas I have long since entertained rather by inference than by their unequivocal expression.

Surely it cannot be so great a "cross" to one who can write such a letter to give a more frequent *exercise* of her *talents*. Neither can she, who upon an attempt to continue a correspondence "relapses into seriousness" and "sits absorbed in thought," be habitually chargeable with such unfaithfulness, who can give such convincing and delightful proof of her powers of "utterance." The rock is now fairly smitten, and the gushing stream I hope will perpetually flow, to cheer and refresh my spirit while life's pilgrimage shall last.

The spring of thought, like water, becomes the fresher and purer the more we use it, and, as *both* are intended by Providence to be equally free, healthful and exhilarating in their enjoyment, pervert not, my dear Agnes, the beneficent design by restraining the indulgence and expression of thought, while nature, with her limpid stream and sparkling rills, is bidding our own minds imitate her in a pure and perpetual flow. My present design, however, is to favor you with a commentary upon your last epistle, interspersed with an occasional thought of my own, rather than trust to the uncertain chance of pleasing by detailing another chapter of the chronicles of one, whose ideas and expressions have borrowed all their excellence from the *object* with which they are associated. When I remarked that I was fearful of *taxing your patience* with my *long letters*, I had not a doubt of the pleasure you have been pleased to express their perusal affords you; nor did I speak in disparagement of their merits (though whatever merit they may have is founded upon their delineation of the most cherished thoughts of one in whom it delights me to believe you feel some interest), but rather from the cross, which

seemed to bear upon your spirits in making the effort to answer, and the intimation you hazarded that I should continue to write, even under the depressing reflection that "no answer should be received," that they were to become a *sound* without a corresponding *echo*. The thought was a passing one, and unwittingly I traced it upon paper, but, upon reflection, have been induced to believe that I have done you great injustice. For when I look into my own heart, and recall the pleasing associations your letters invariably excite, why should I doubt that my Agnes experiences a corresponding train of thought while perusing even my dry and unentertaining, though I must do them the justice to add, honest expressions of my feelings. Since, therefore, you cannot find it in your heart "to refuse an answer when I wish it," and since the last letter with which you have favored me has shown your determination to take up the "cross," if one it be, oh, doubt not, my dear girl, that you will accomplish your purpose to my "entire satisfaction." Years may possibly be necessary to overcome your "timidity" and alleviate the "task of writing," but ages will never efface their pleasing remembrance or cause me to cease to be "anxious" for the reception of your epistles. Were it not that you "see" me, I should have been half tempted to be "angry" with you for harboring the thought, but when your eyes are benignantly directed upon me, even the semblance of "anger" is turned into gladness. Of the *troubles* which afflict poor, frail humanity, we may have to endure our allotted part, but the *trouble* which you seem to estimate as alone worthy of the name, my heart tells me you shall never experience.

I have told you my reasons why I unhesitatingly

assert that I can never cease to love you. Are they not convincing? Or will a *lifetime* alone be sufficient to test their validity? I do not conceive it necessary for proof, yet I trust a lifetime of mutual happiness will prove a beautiful illustration of their correctness. Banish these sombre clouds from your mind. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." But while, my dear girl, you are willing to admit that your troubles are nearly or quite all "imaginary," you now experience a "real grief," and with deep humility and conscious guilt I am forced to confess you have occasion for your grief. "*I love not my God.*"

Oh, that man, from the natural impulse of his heart, could admire the wisdom, venerate the goodness, supplicate the mercy and reciprocate the love of his maker! To a certain extent degraded humanity may emulate these exalted sentiments, yet how far below the rightful standard to which the thoughts should aspire. The rule is too pure, the requirement too holy, for unassisted human effort. "If ye love me keep my commandments." Here all mere human excellence sinks into insignificance, and grace, grace alone, can inspire the hallowed motive. Oh, Agnes, I *grieve* in your "*grief*," yet not as one devoid of *Hope*. Assist with your prayers that heart which *loves* humanity, which *loves* yourself, and though last, not least, would wish to *love its God*. In my running commentary I have only glanced at *some* of the thoughts with which your letter abounds. "Now," as Shakespeare says, "that the dark clouds that lowered upon our house are in the deep bosom of the ocean buried," now that we have your father's assent, your mother's cognizance and your own heart's approval, may I not rightfully ex-

pect a continuance of your favors for the time to come? A remark or two upon the closing paragraph of your letter, and I must think of ending my delightful toil, at least, for the present. *Fear not of tiring my patience* with your long letter, for of a verity you may call it *one*. What else would you call it? Is it not rich in thought, choice in expression, possessing length, breadth and *solidity*; does it not come from the *heart*; has it not been received *there*? Yes, it is a letter, oh, for a thousand such! One word as to the *motive*. You are not "*selfish*." Did your heart not "*hear*" the loud negation I sent by love's swift telegraph? Pleasure, you may experience, even from this feeble portraiture of your own thoughts and feelings may you derive it; but *selfishness can never be your ruling motive to action*. Did you *hear* any other answer to your question?

Yours ever most affectionately,

J. G.

I wrote the most of this last evening, intending to finish it today, and by my procrastination it has become so dark that I doubt whether I will get it as well filled as I could wish yours to be, but there is some consolation that the *bubbles* with which I *inflate* them occupy a good deal of space. You told me in one of your letters that you *fancied* it would not please me. You ought, at least, to be *half pleased* with this, for it is more than *half* constructed from your own thoughts. But it may be that I have marred the artifice by an injudicious and untasteful use of the *materials*. If I have, I know you will pardon your

J. G.

P. S.—Of "*course*" you will answer this, or else . . .

Do not look so *startled*, I have not as yet finished the sentence. Shall I finish it? . . . or else I may *trouble* you with *another* of my own.

JOSEPH GASTON, M.D.
TO
MISS AGNES GREENBANK

Saturday, September 19, 1846.

MY DEAR AGNES:

When revisiting scenes that you once loved so dearly,
When the laugh meets your ear that rung once so clearly,
When you gaze on your friends, once so bounding and
free,

And recall the past hours devoted to glee,
Will you *then* think of me?

'Mid scenes so attractive without and within,
'Mid the soft notes of music, the city's loud din,
'Mid the lovely of women, the graceful of men,
When mirth like contagion is spreading; oh, then,
Will you *once* think of me?

'Tis said by the poet, I know not how true,
That "distance enchantment affords to the view";
When far, far away from these scenes *now* so dear,
Will memory *paint* you their image as clear,
Should you then think of me?

Yes, fondly will memory bring to my mind,
The image of him that I left far behind;

When the laugh rings the loudest, when joyous all seems,
In my moments of wakefulness, aye in my dreams,
Will I then think of *thee*.

Oh, doubt not you *ever* remembered will be,
By the *friend* who *so often* subscribes him, J. G.

WAYNESBURG

September 23, 1846.

(First part of this letter missing)

Will experience in enacting anew the scenes of by-gone years, and rehearsing to each other page after page of the diary of your subsequent lives. I have thought of the brilliant prospect which fortune has perhaps opened to *some*, and the *tears* you may have dropped over the untimely grave of others. I have thought of the various ties which friendship weaves around our hearts, and have suffered my mind to yield submissively to their constraining power. Yet, Agnes, I *must* tell you that I *long for your return*. Oh, believe me, I am not *jealous* of your pleasures! I would not detract a tittle from the measure of your joys. Is there any inconsistency in wishing for your happiness while I ardently wish for your *return*? Ah, no. I believe you, when you express a longing wish for home. I believe the wealth and novelty, the fascinations of friendship, with all the alluring accompaniments of city life, though they may have a passing charm for the senses, do not yet afford you that *real happiness* which the retirement of Waynesburg yields, with the *object* you have blessed with your early, ardent *love*. "Come in the evening or come in the morning," a hearty, joyous welcome will await you.

It is *currently reported* that Miss Mary Beam is to be married on Thursday next, October 1st, and Miss Rebecca Griffith, I believe, with certainty. The latter is engaged to a son of Peter Dampman, who lives not far from Mr. Good's. Your family are all well, so far as I know. I saw Caroline at the store this evening with William, but had not an opportunity to speak with her. I have not called at the house since your absence, but have enquired almost daily of herself or some one else. She is getting along pretty well and I believe has plenty of *company*, and that is the reason I have not gone round, as I might possibly be a restraint upon their mirth. You left it with me to do as I should think proper as regards my answering your letter. You see I could not resist the temptation to try if I could not give you an agreeable surprise. It was written in the greatest haste, as I have yet another to write to Tom.

Wednesday morning. In reading this over, I do not discover anything in it worthy of having it sent to you, yet when I think, that if it has no other effort, it will at least *convince* you that you are held in *fond recollection*, I am satisfied. So here it goes to the mail. May it afford you a moment's gratification.

Adieu, my dearest,
J. G.

JOSEPH GASTON, M.D.
TO
MISS AGNES GREENBANK

WAYNESBURG

Thursday, September 24, 1846.

MY DEAR AGNES:

As the ocean-bound voyager, when far in the offing, gazes with riveted eye upon the fast-receding objects of his native land, and through the dim distance marks each spot hallowed by his earliest recollections; or, when sight has failed him, by fancy's aid, recalls the forms and lineaments of the friends he most fondly loves—even so, when ascending the hill which afforded a prospect of that *church* far to the eastward, I turned, and took a last lingering look of the vehicle that was bearing my *loved one* far away. Are her eyes like mine, thought I, striving to pierce the barrier of intervening space? The thought was a sweet one. The carriage eventually faded from my *sight*, and I was forced to seek elsewhere for consolation. Our hearts, however true to their destiny, throb on even when the *external sense* has failed. I *felt* a consciousness *within me* they were *then* beating in unison. We *mutually* felt the pang of separation. Was it not so? Yes, my heart tells me I have interpreted aright the emotions we then experienced. Agnes (there is something so sweet about that name, or perhaps it may be its associations, that you must pardon its frequent repetition in my letters), though forced to endure "our first long separation," we can at least relieve the tedium of the hours by a faithful chronicle of our feelings and most cherished thoughts. It is rarely that we prize sufficiently,

or in accordance with their true deserts, the *social relations* with which we are surrounded. When *death* enters the circle of our friends, how apt are we to magnify the virtues, which till then seemed only half developed, but which now, by the genial warmth of *our hearts*, come forth in full-blown loveliness and bear their fruits, even when the *bosom* that *first nurtured* them is mouldering in the grave. The inhabitants of a beautiful and picturesque country scarcely realize the magnificent display which nature has exhibited before them, till by some freak of fortune or waywardness of will they are thrown amid scenes that are bleak, desolate and barren. Even our commonest friendships are but slightly valued, till by some sudden stroke of fate the ties are sundered forever. But if such are our emotions, when Time is lopping an *occasional* branch of the vine that has grown and flourished around our hearts, *what must we feel* when the axe is laid at the *root* of our dearest hopes and holiest affections? When we stand alone and desolate, with the withered branches, which nature intended for grace and ornament, now playing their mournful dirge, and the trunk destined for support, a crushing incubus upon our souls. Thank God, that in this early period of our pilgrimage we are not called upon to pass *through* the deep waters, though we have just tasted of their bitterness! We part, it is true, but Hope, the bright morning star that ushers in the sun of life, and accompanies it in all its progress, Hope tells me we shall meet again. Oh, Agnes, if forced by fate to meet no more, what rock-bound coast, what desert shore, of all creation what drear part were half so cheerless as my heart? Dive into my soul, ye melancholy thoughts. Can I never be cheerful

when I wish to be? I pledge myself to make the attempt, at least, in the remainder of my letter. When I returned I think you would be amused, could I graphically relate the sage conjectures which the inquisitive of our village were indulging in reference to our departure. A solemn conclave, I believe, was held somewhere in the neighborhood of Broad and Market Sts., in which the *worthy matrons* that cluster about that corner were duly represented. "Did you see them," says one, "carriage, baggage and passengers? Something more than common is about taking place. Surely so much luggage, this sudden departure, and *he* accompanying them can betoken nothing less than a marriage. Yes, they are going to Philadelphia to celebrate it."

"No," says *another*, who, like Thomas, was disposed to doubt without more convincing proof. "No, the *females* are about paying a visit to a relative, who contemplates a speedy departure to England. 'Tis true, they may have *some other object* in visiting Phila., yet of this I am certain, *he* will speedily return—you will see him today." Others favored the meeting with their *sage surmises*, and then the arguments pro and con were delivered upon the various hypothesis that had been submitted, until it was discovered that no definite conclusion could be obtained. So they wisely determined to adjourn and patiently await the issue of passing events, not, however, without each member inwardly resolving to keep up a *desperate thinking* upon the subject. Our friends over the "Way" were duly excited, but seemed wonderfully relieved upon my return. So you see, my dear Agnes, that we are not so utterly insignificant as not to occasion a surprising commotion among the *disinterested mothers*

of our little village. I took a most hearty laugh as I listened to the description, of which the above is but a meagre outline. I paid a visit to my brother yesterday (Wednesday) and disclosed to him *our secret*; a queer secret, you will conclude, which all the "world of Waynesburg" are standing with mouths agape ready to divulge. They are truly a wise set. 'Tis a passing wonder, and pity 'tis, 'tis true, they have not long ere this been searching in the arena of nature for that hidden treasure, the philosopher's stone, doubtless they would have been the happy discoverers. The secret was either too valuable, or else my brother doubted his capacity to safely guard it *alone*, so he called in the aid of his family *directly in my presence* to help him keep it. Now, was not that too bad? I never dreamt of his disclosing it until my departure, but you would have been amused at the philosophic calmness with which I bore it. They were all delighted at the near prospect of our mutual happiness, and are exceedingly anxious to see and receive their *new sister*. I think you will hardly fail to be pleased with my brother. He is a man of an excellent *heart*, and possesses that qualification to a charm, which in the *cant* of the world, is dominated "tact." I have this afternoon received a letter from Tom dated September 17th, and addressed to the care of Corbit, but by some means it found its way into the mail. You must thank him for me heartily, for this fresh token of his remembrance. He will probably want some *thanks* as a slight remuneration for the use of his name in the address of this letter. It is rather tantalizing to direct a letter to him, and, when he is just in the act of opening it, to have the fair hand of a Lady thrust out with an emphatic gesture, while

she exclaims: "Break not the seal, oh, break not the seal! Be patient, the mystery I will reveal. 'Tis a ruse to deceive the inquisitive eye. Of those, who in secrets of lovers, would pry." It appears from his letter that he has been indebted to John for a bit of news in which *we* are materially implicated. Tell him, my dear Agnes, that I will answer his letter shortly, when I will give him the description of an interview in which he expresses some curiosity. Your father arrived in town today, I believe. I saw him as I was returning from a ride this afternoon, but had not an opportunity to speak to him. Caroline will be rejoiced at his coming, for she told me yesterday that her *actual courage* is not as great as in her imagination she had fancied it. She says she is more lonely in the day than at night, two or three of the girls having passed each night with her since your absence. Tell Tom I will speak with Mr. Marple tomorrow in relation to the subject matter of a note presented me this evening by Eliza, and will send him a speedy answer. And now, my dear Agnes, I have almost filled my sheet, and upon reading it over have been half tempted not to send it. I do not think it will please you, and why I could not light upon a more agreeable mood I really cannot tell. It is truly *lights and shadows*, though shade has rather the predominance. Pardon my inability at present to please, for you *know* that my *object in writing was to please you*. Take the *will* for the *deed*, and "if a bee can extract honey from a weed, and a wise man draw a moral from the d——l himself," as Shakespeare has it, I know the goodness of your heart will lead you to overlook its faults, while you faithfully attempt to draw some pleasure from its perusal. I have thought of you continually since

your absence, and hope you still fondly remember.

Yours ever most affectionately,

J. G.

P. S.—When you answer this, and, my dear girl, let it not be long, tell me when Thomas expects to return, and also how long you expect to be in Phila. I am not selfish, and wish you to enjoy your visit, but should you weary there, oh, hasten home, where there is *one* at least who will never weary of you.

Adieu.

You see, I have nearly exhausted my space, but the *subject I address* is inexhaustible. One thought more and I have done. I have not robbed myself of rest in writing this, but close now about 10 o'clock P. M. So let not that thought detract from whatever pleasure you may find in reading it.

Again adieu, my dearest,

J. G.

JOSEPH GASTON, M.D.

TO

MISS AGNES GREENBANK

WAYNESBURG

October 16, 1846.

MY DEAR AGNES:

It is some time since I had the pleasure of addressing you a few lines, and, though I cannot make myself believe I am your debtor, yet the *enjoyment I experience, in tracing for your perusal a few thoughts*, is alone sufficient to induce me to write, had I not the additional

motive—a cordial compliance with your request. But what shall I say? What topic, heretofore untouched, shall I comment upon? We have described our *emotions*—do they not glow as brightly as ever? We have spoken of the *flame* long kindled in our hearts—does it not burn as purely still? We have uttered our *hopes*—are they not *now* as buoyant? We have dwelt upon our prospects—are they not yet as fair? Oh, yes; the *distance* that formerly lent “enchantment to the view” is diminishing as swiftly as time speeds on, and the nearer we approach the *goal* of our *hopes*, the *consummation* of our most *cherished desires*, new *charms* delight our eyes, new pleasures beckon us on. In contemplating the *future*, however, my dear Agnes, let us not suffer our minds to indulge in anticipations of happiness above and beyond what falls to the lot of humanity. In *offering* you my *hand* and *heart*, I have done it unconditionally, unreservedly. My constant *effort* shall be through life to make them worthy of your acceptance, and my most ardent hope that you may never lament the hour, when through smiles and tears, you cheered me with the assurance, that they were not rejected. Although I have never detected your indulgence in a *mercenary thought* or *desire*, yet I am forced to lament that I cannot guild my *offering* with the *wealth* the world so highly prizes, so eagerly pursues. But *happiness*—“*our being’s end and aim*”—thanks to a benignant Providence, is not confined to palaces, or the gorgeous habitations of the rich. My dear girl, if you possess the grace of *contentment*, I think I may confidently promise you *happiness*. No *effort* on my part shall be wanting to ensure it. The *assurance* that I possess an *object* worthy of my most vigorous exer-

tions will add new force to my *will*, and nerve me with still greater power to endure the rude conflicts of the world, and eventually I hope to overcome them. With your *smile* to enliven, your *love* to warm my heart, "the wintry storms" will quickly pass, and one unbounded spring encircle all. Yes, I *feel* that *our hearts* are so constituted, that we cannot fail to be happy. In less than four weeks, agreeably to my *almanack*, the treasure I have so long sought, so highly prized, I hope to call mine own. As Charley Mackay says, "wait a little longer." In the *future* that vast, untrodden field, whither each step is bearing us, it were folly not to *look forward*, that we may shun (if yet perchance there be) the *rugged heights*, or *dangerous chasms* that may beset our progress, but folly greater still to pass unnoticed the rich, delicious fruits, the blooming flowers that cluster at *our feet*. The *present* is all that we possess. May we learn from its teachings those lessons of wisdom which will insure our happiness and prosperity for the time to come. Those who are continually chasing the phantoms of an excited fancy will find them ever eluding their grasp, while in their hot pursuit they may be trampling under foot treasures more valuable and enduring. I think I have discovered in your disposition that happy *balance*, between the *unattainable* upon earth, to which *some* are continually *aspiring*—and that *morbid melancholy* which is constantly *depressing others* in the dust. The constitution of *your mind* I believe to be a happy one. Do not think harshly of me, my dear Agnes, if I frankly confess, that I have made your *moral nature* the subject of my closest study. The happiness of a lifetime is too momentous to be periled by a leap in the dark. But while I confess

the *subject* of my *investigations*, it delights my heart to acknowledge the *unspeakable pleasure* the *study* has afforded me. I believe you are *really* as good as in my moments of excited fancy I had pictured you. How many thoughtlessly rush into the marriage state, to which we are so rapidly approaching, influenced by some *mercenary motive*; or impelled by the *impulse* of *excited feelings*, and in a short time awake to the consciousness of their folly, and lament their indiscretion to the end of their lives.

Not so with those whose *motives* are pure, whose *love* is fervent. Like the prismatic colors, they mellow and beautify each other by blending their rays together.

I must not dwell longer on this subject, for I fear I may tire your patience—yet, when a train of thought like the *above* comes into my mind, I scarcely know when to cease. Will you forgive me, my dear girl? Oh, yes; I know you will. Doubtless, you have suffered your fancy to weave a *web* more delicately, and yet of the same *texture*. Will you not give me a *specimen* in your *promised* letter, that I may delightedly muse upon it at my leisure? Am I making an unreasonable request? Our *undertakings* are almost *half accomplished*, when we have formed our *resolution*—resolve, the rest is easy. You will now be forced to confess you are my *debtor*. *Short settlements*, they say, make *long friends*. Think of this, and do not longer force me to *sue* for my *demand*, or still resort to *court*, when the session of *courting* is so *nearly expired*.

Yours ever affectionately,

J. G.

You will not fail to answer this. though it is shorter

than usual. My intention when I commenced was to send you a short note, but my thoughts have run on at such length, that I am almost tempted to call it a letter, and charge the postage accordingly.

J. G.

JOSEPH GASTON, M.D.
TO
MISS AGNES GREENBANK

WAYNESBURG
October 26, 1846.

MY DEAR AGNES:

It was my intention to have gone to Morgantown this afternoon, and I had, therefore, thought of postponing an answer to your cheering little epistle of Saturday evening, but, as I have deferred the ride, it affords at least a pleasing consolation to my mind that I am thereby enabled to perform a *delightful duty*. I never sat down to write you a *few* lines, but I have felt more reconciled with the world, and a more cordial good-will toward all mankind. In the collisions and conflicts of society, where meanness and mercenary motives are powerful incentives, it delights me to believe there is, at least, *one heart* beating with noble and generous impulse. In the association of men and women, where pride and jealousy pampered by detraction are like jackals, rioting upon the lacerated bodies of their victims—it delights me to believe there is, at least, one too honest to “filch another’s good name,” too sensitive not to feel a pang of sadness over the object that slander may have prostrated in the dust.

In a world where wealth and power are ever prompting their votaries to strifes and contentions, it is a source of indescribable pleasure to me to know that there is at least one bosom where peace dwells, where disinterested love reigns. Do not think, my dear Agnes, that I am attempting to "flatter" you. I have never told you *half* of the goodness that I confidently believe a benignant Providence has endowed you. What I *have discovered* makes me proud to believe that I shall one day (and that not a far distant one) call you *mine*. And as day by day our lifetime steals away, will not *new beauties* and *new treasures* ever rise to view? Like the pilgrim, as he journeys on, finds at each step new scenes to delight his eye, a new horizon to bound his vision, till the sun of life sinks from the earth, and leaves him in the gloom and solitude of death. Oh, yes, my dear girl, I look forward to happiness in the *future*. The thought of *the jewel* I have found (as it were, accidentally) delights my heart even before I have, as yet, possessed it. My nature is essentially domestic and social.

In social life I have always thus far looked for happiness. With you, I know I shall not be disappointed. My constant effort shall be to promote *your peace and contentment*; and so holy a purpose, so congenial an employment, I feel cannot fail to ensure *my own*. You say in your last letter that you believe that "*our friendship will be long*." For my own part, I have no doubt of it. It has grown with our acquaintance, it has flourished for a year without one frost or storm to mar its loveliness, and is not this some reliable assurance for the time to come? Time, that tries all things, will only confirm our love. As we become more and more intimately ac-

quainted with the secret springs of each other's thoughts and emotions, I feel an assurance that we will reciprocally experience still greater inducements to perpetuate *this feeling*. You say that you "think you have, in some measure, changed since you came to Waynesburg." That you have changed is beyond all doubt, and changed for the better. I am unable to say whether your nature is *materially altered*, but this I know, you have changed *toward me*. When I look back through the past year, I feel surprised at the change that has taken place in my own breast, and the corresponding change our intercourse has had upon us both. Though I felt new emotions within me, how long was it before I could muster sufficient courage to avow them? Oh, how my heart throbbed, lest in my attempt to blow the feeble ember into a flame I should extinguish it forever. Thanks, my heartfelt thanks, that your goodness, yes—your love, prompted you not to reject as altogether worthless the heart I had confidently laid at your feet. I am resolved, as far as my efforts can accomplish my purpose, that you shall never lament *that hour*. How many a noble heart has been spurned through mere womanly caprice, that untold wealth would have been freely given, to possess again! How many a female heart now mourns in solitude, her hopes blasted, her confidence betrayed, her love rejected, by trifling in her vanity with a heart too sensitive to be sported with, and by her folly has consigned them, as Byron says, "*the one to end in madness, both in misery.*" There is no greater *autocrat* in all the world than woman, with her love at her feet. My dear girl, should she not exercise her *power* with moderation, with feeling? Too many, alas, do not; dear Agnes, thanks that you were not

of the number. My heart, I feel, is not of that plastic nature to assume its former character when crushed and trampled on. You will excuse me, my dear girl, that I have again taken a half sheet to detail to you some of my passing thoughts, but I wished to finish it this afternoon, and have not time to say more.

Yours ever affectionately,

J. G.

If you can consistently, with the promise you made your mother, I should like to hear from you again; if not, I shall have to take my pay *in visits*.

Adieu,

J. G.

On the twelfth day of November, 1846, at the Methodist Episcopal parsonage, in Waynesburg (now Honeybrook), Chester County, Pennsylvania, Joseph Gaston, M.D., was married to Agnes Greenbank by the Rev. Henry B. Mauger.

JOSEPH GASTON, M.D.
TO
FREDERICK GASTON, M.D.

WAYNESBURG
November 30, 1846.

DEAR BROTHER:

I had intended to have written to you as soon as I returned, but from negligence I am again placed in the dilemma of momentarily seeing the stage, so you will excuse my haste and brevity. We arrived at Alex's on Tuesday, and concluded to stop and see how he and family were. His cold is better, I believe, and he is going about as usual, although he has had to vesicate his breast. The rest of the family are well. Mrs. Denny is in Phila. Agnes was delighted with her visit. How are you getting along at present? I have not received a line from you since my return. I am anxious to hear from you. You must be exceedingly careful of yourself. Come on to Alex as soon as you feel sufficiently invigorated. Tell Hugh to write me frequently. There is nothing new in this neighborhood. There is not much sickness at present, although there were several calls for me in my absence.

In great haste,
Your affectionate brother,
J. GASTON.

JOSEPH GASTON, M.D.

TO

MRS. JOSEPH GASTON

Monday morning, September 16, 1850.

MY DEAR AGNES:

I must still write, though I have nothing to say. I am well and have a ravenous appetite. I am boarding with Mrs. Miller. I have been very busy since you left, and it has been *that* alone that has dissipated, in some degree, my loneliness and my melancholy thoughts. I want you to stay till you feel *ready* to come, but I should feel too happy if you were ready to start this morning. Those cases that you are aware of are in "status quo" with the exception of one (Mrs. Platt), which has reached the "*denouement*." On their account, I do not see how it is possible for me to come yet after you, though I should be delighted to do so. I feel very anxious about *your* health. You speak of your great weakness. I pray the Lord you may be entirely recovered by this time. Your letter of last Tuesday morning was not received here till Friday mail, and not by the way of Downingtown, as directed. There is something wrong about the mail. This is a great source of uneasiness to me, the length of time necessary to get your letters. I do not wish to burden Father, but I know the people here would be delighted to see him, and, if he could bring you home *shortly*, it would please me greatly. You must kiss my dear babes for me—take the greatest care of yourself.

I have not heard of brother's folks since you left. If my coming up will be the *quickest* way to get you

home, write, and at any sacrifice I will come immediately.

Your affectionate and lonely husband,
J. G.

WILLIAM B. GASTON
TO
JOSEPH GASTON, M.D.

SOMERVILLE
December 1, 1855.

MY DEAR SON:

Your letter of 29th inst. has just been received, containing a ten dollar bill. Your letter, containing the intelligence of the death of your infant daughter, I would have acknowledged, but indisposition prevented. I have been afflicted with influenza, or violent cold in my head and bones, and, in the midst of my sickness, my leg has broken out again. The last time it troubled me it was sore about a year and a half. Healed up about a year ago, and from that time till now it has given me no trouble. My health has been remarkably good, and during the last summer, when my building was going on, I attended daily and superintended and did some work, too. I think I told you in my last all about my building. The lot is situated on a new street which runs north, parallel with the street from the covered bridge and graveyard, along by, and between the old brick Academy and the church lot, into the North street, the street Hugh is on. My house is the *third* building from the north corner of the first church lot, on the east side of the street.

It is a pleasant situation and a good home. I feel contented and happy and am much pleased with our house, and hope that we will be able to get along, (by observing rigid economy,) on our income. I think that I shall get some writing in the Clerk's office, under Swan Hartwell, our new Clerk, after a while. He made a promise to Stryker Van Dusen before the election, (before I spoke to him,) that he would continue him in the office, if he and his father and brothers would vote for him. Hugh says that he will give me writing after a while, so I will exercise the grain of patience.

William wrote me a letter a few days ago. He wants you to write to him. He says Alexander has not written him in three years. I am sorry; he does not write me either. If we all get safe to Heaven at last, we will need no epistles of pen, ink and paper. I have not had a letter from John in two or three weeks. Frazee and his wife spent Thanksgiving (29th inst.) at N. B. She has just been in to tell us that Anna wrote to her father, and gave account of their donation visit, which came off on Thursday and Friday of week before last. They got clothing, groceries, coal, wood, hay, and all kinds of provinder in abundance and \$160 in money. John is very popular among his people; they almost idolize him. Martin John Ryerson's family at Bloomingdale alone gave \$50 in money, besides other things of value.

Fanny was confined last Saturday with another daughter (3rd). Hugh was greatly disappointed that it was not a son. She is doing well. A beautiful brick seminary or schoolhouse has gone up above Hugh's on North street. The size is 50 square, with basement under the whole of it for a man to live in and take charge of

the premises, &c. There has been built a number of houses on that street, and others will as soon as spring opens. Cannot you and Agnes, with all the children, come on and make us a visit? I want to see you all much. May the Lord bless you, and keep you, and sanctify your bereavements to you. So prays your affectionate Father,

W. B. GASTON.

Kiss the children for me. Tell Mary she must write to me again.

JOSEPH GASTON, M.D.
TO
HUGH M. GASTON, ESQ.

WAYNESBURG
June 17, 1862.

DEAR BROTHER:

I was very grateful, the other day, in the receipt of your *shadowy* epistle. It brought to my mind a train of pleasing reflections. There was evidently the semblance of well-developed manhood—robust, healthy, portly. There was the erect head, well-formed front, a slight degree of baldness, indicating maturity of years. The hirsute lip showed a slight conformity to the military spirit of the age. It was invested in the adornments of fine broadcloth and fair linen. It was erect in position, it was composed, and had the *mens conscia recti* air of a man about it, and that man was *my brother*. I shall cherish the image, though I have for years carried about in mind's inner chamber its exact counterpart. How

many times during the past year have I thought of you and intending writing! Alas! I have failed in the use of the pen, but I believe our spirits have communed. This year of rebellion has kept my mind in state of complete tension. I have never suffered myself to doubt the final triumph of the Government, but the means to be used, to bring about that auspicious result, have bothered me. The ghost, or rather the horrid reality of slavery, starts up whichever way I turn, and I see no safety now, or in the future, but in its complete extirpation. We are escaping from a worse than Egyptian bondage, we are passing at the beck of Providence through the *Red Sea of Blood* to a higher and holier Sinai, whereon will be proclaimed the new commandment given unto us, "that ye love one another." This law, I believe, to be totally incompatible with any form of oppression. We are all well at present, except our youngest boy, who is teething—at times, feverish and fretful. Four of our children had scarlet fever this spring. They have entirely recovered, without leaving behind any of the *dregs* that so frequently follow that complaint. I renew to you my grateful thanks for your picture, but I should like it better if you would *bring yourself, wife and children*. You can come through in a day. Think of it, and come along this summer.

Where is brother Will? I should like to write to him, and I wish he would come also. Alexander's family are well, I believe. I have not been down for some time. Give my love to sister Fanny and the children, and believe me,

Your affectionate Brother,
JOE.

JOHN GASTON, D.D.
TO
JOSEPH GASTON, M.D.

SANGERTIE'S
November 10, 1864.

MY DEAR BROTHER JOS.:

You may imagine me this morning, up to concert pitch. Never before have I felt so grateful and so jubilant because of the result of an election. My faith in God, as it relates to our Country's future, is stronger than ever. Even now the clouds are breaking, and we are emerging into the light of renovated life. But there is no use of talking—the events of this week have settled the question, and I am rejoiced. My cup needs only one additional drop, and that is that New Jersey might come back into the Union. I love the little State, and have good hopes concerning her. The defeat of Seymour is scarcely less a matter of joy with us than the success of Lincoln. For the past month the Copperheads have confessed they had no chance upon the Presidential ticket, but they were positively certain of this State, and oh, how they have worked for it! I have thought of you as the Minister of Consolation, to those fellows of your town, who went up to Lancaster to the ratification meeting while I was with you. Do give them a Dover's powder or so, and advise the use of a little iron to strengthen the nerves. Tell your friend, Davis, that I send him my hearty congratulations. I was mightily pleased with him. I trust sister and the children are all well. Mary, I know, was relieved of a heavy load when the examination was concluded. I thought she would

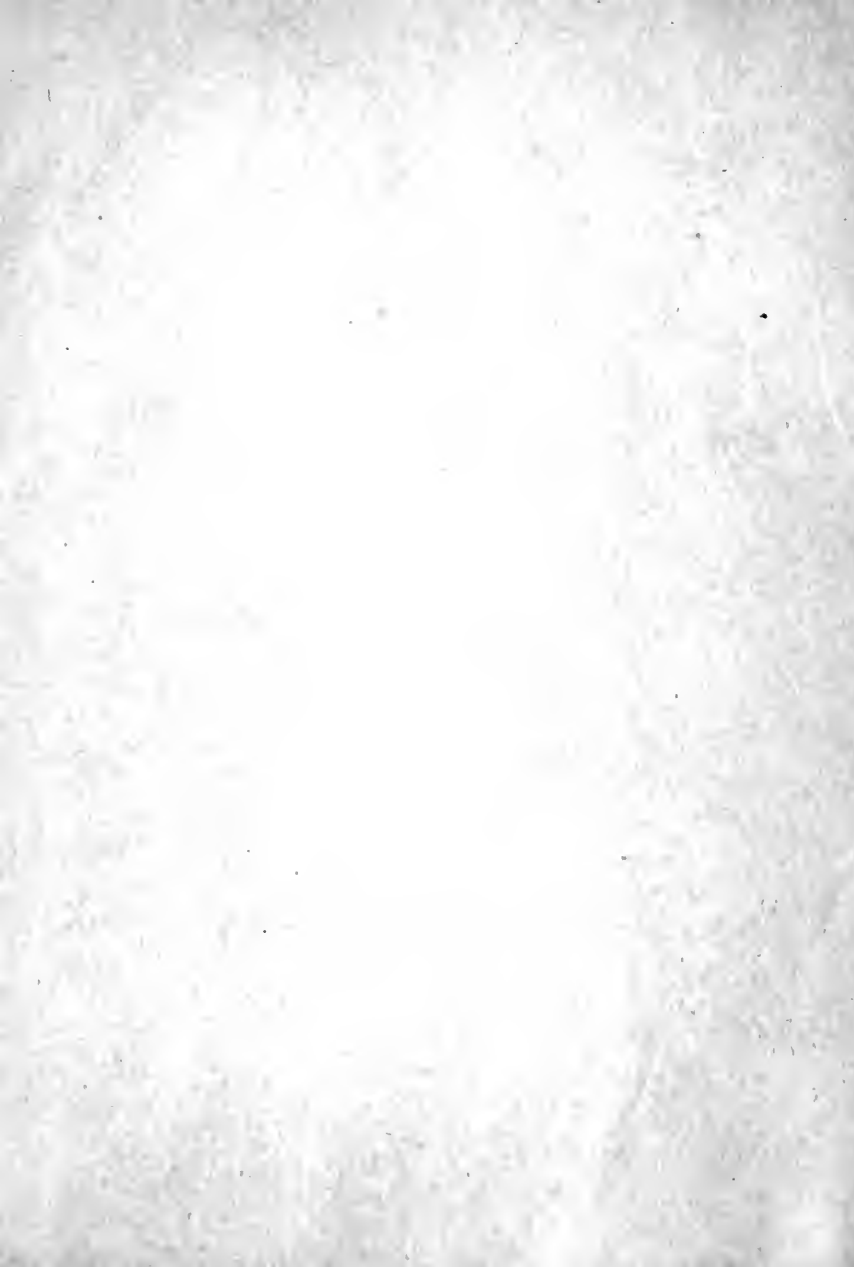
write me a full account of the exercises, and tell me how nobly she acquitted herself. Fred and Jos. must put in now, and see what rapid strides they can make in the paths of knowledge during the present winter. This is their sowing time, and I want them to remember that as they sow they must expect to reap. Time and opportunity lost now are lost forever. I have no fears for Fanny—all that she wants is a chance. If I mistake not, Fred had better strike out with a determined resolution to go ahead, or Fanny will yet leave him in the distance. The little ones have no trouble, as yet, with their books. I think of them as well and happy. I suppose the crops have been gathered from the back farm and that the pigs are having a good time of it. It is a little unfortunate, however, that I could not plead their cause for about a month yet. I have not written to, nor heard from, Brother Alex. or family since I parted from them. He went with me down to the city. We enjoyed our visit vastly at both the Brothers. I live over the pleasure every day. I wish my heart you would come and see us. We will do the fair thing with you. Will often speaks of his cousins, and wonders if they are running the railroad yet. It was the greatest trip of his life. We found all our folks well. The baby grows finely. Anna is very well. She enjoyed very much the account we gave her of our visit. She would be delighted to see sister. By the way, Anna told me the other day that she had been making an exploration among the garments that had been outgrown, and that she found several articles that are useless to us that would come in play among your little children. They are worth sending, if you would have them. If you are not oversensitive upon such points, it

would give me great pleasure to express them to you. Ministers, you know, are by no means squeamish upon this subject, but are mighty glad to get a lift now and then of this kind, and I don't see why Doctors should be any more vulnerable, especially as between brother and brother. Let me know your mind in regard to the matter. I have not heard directly from Hugh since I was at your house. I noticed the other day, however, that he was active, speaking often for Father Abe and the Union. I saw Will on my way home, and gave him a good report of you all. He is well and doing very well. He will spend a part of the winter with us. Give our love to Sister and all the children. Write soon and often. Don't forget your promises. Come and see us.

Your affectionate brother,
JOHN GASTON.

We thank Thee, O Lord, for Thy continual goodness. Bless the present refreshment for our use. Watch over us all throughout this day and through life, pardon our sins and save us, for Christ's sake. Amen.

JOSEPH GASTON.





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